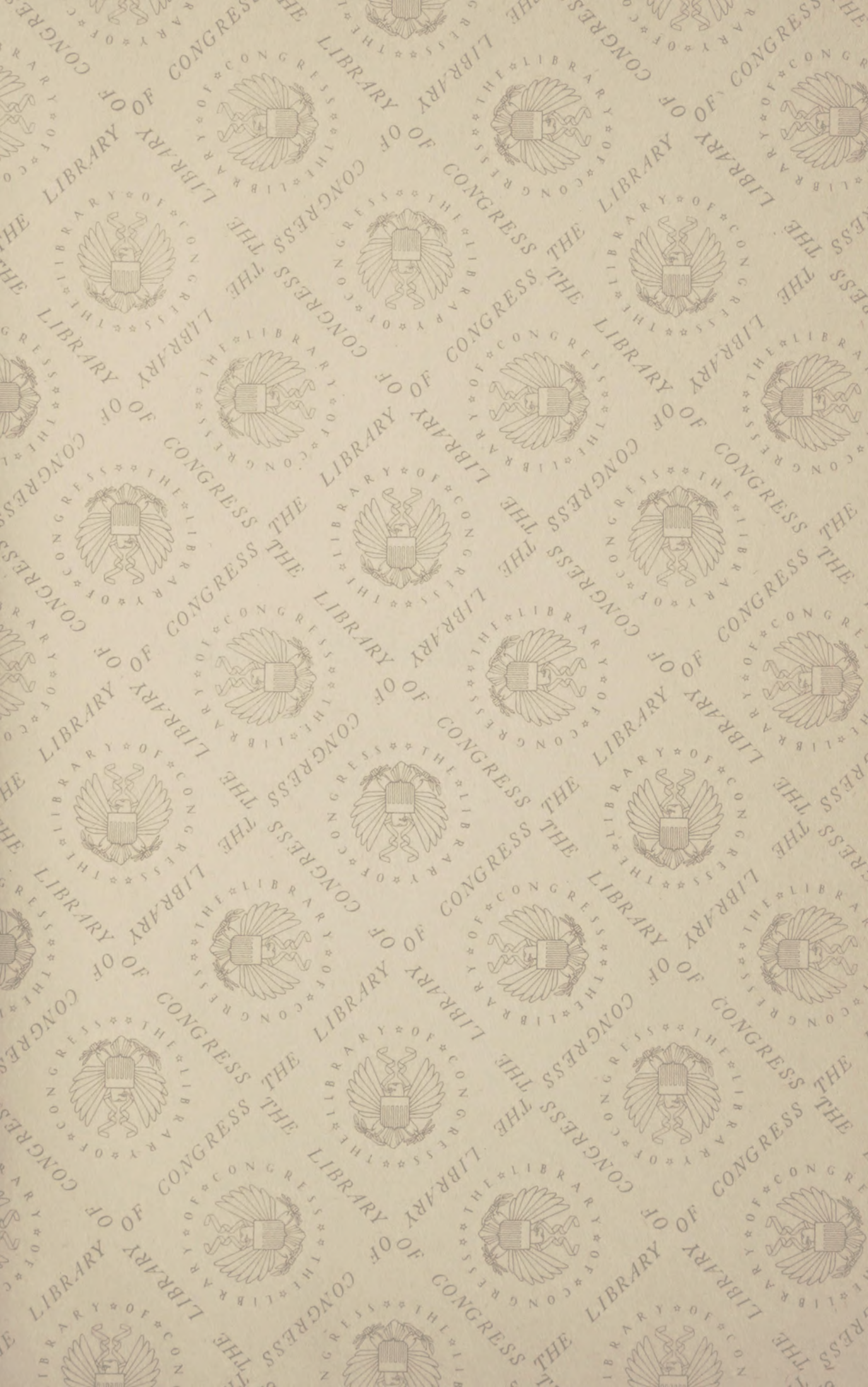


DALLIN & WINFIELD



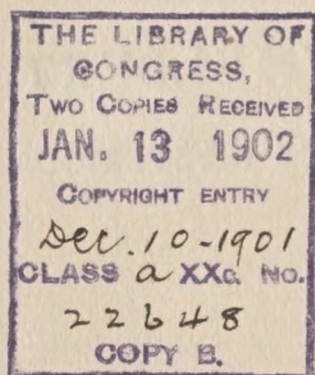
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ALLIN WINFIELD

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Allin Winfield

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ALLIN WINFIELD.

I.

MY TWIN BEREAVEMENT.

ALAS! 'twas a sad day for me when Colonel Allin Winfield, of the Continental army, breathed his last, and was laid to rest on his old Winfield estate just where the Connecticut river flows by the border line of Vermont and Massachusetts. My noble mother, unable to face the future with her feeble strength of soul and body, yielded to her grief, and within a day and night followed her soldier husband to his grave. 'Twas for me an awakening that was full of sadness; and 'tis even now I dwell upon it with sorrow and heaviness of heart.

The death of the two left me face to face with a momentous change in my life. There were few near relatives living; and the majority of these were residents in England who had shown no sympathy with the colonists in their rebellion against the mother country. They had naturally drifted so far away from the New Hampshire Winfields that I was not even aware of their present location. During the war all communications with them had ceased;

and since peace had been established neither branch of the family had sought to renew the correspondence.

The day after the double tragedy I conned over in mind the list of cousins, aunts and uncles who would be the most likely to sympathize with me in my bereavement. There was Uncle William—my father's own brother—who had always been a strong Tory, and who at the outbreak of the war had been forced to flee to the English army for protection. His estate, which had adjoined that of my father's, was confiscated, and the monies turned into the common treasury for sustaining and prosecuting the war. In his disappointment and wrath at this turn of affairs, Uncle William had written many angry letters to his brother; blaming my father principally for the loss of his property, and making wrong assertions that were irritating to read. Uncle William was strong and set in his ways (in this respect resembling my father); and it had been his persistent abuse of the colonists for rebelling that had brought wrath down upon his head, and forced him to flee. As a youngster, I did not dislike this stubborn Tory, and had the war never broken out I know I should have found a welcome in his home. But now I knew not in what part of the world he was living.

There was Aunt Flemming—wife of my father's second brother—who had never ventured outside of England, and who still probably entertained the belief that America was a distant country which all self-respecting and God-fearing people should avoid.

'Twas not necessary to inquire into her belief of the relative merits of the colonists and England in the conflict that had permanently separated the two. She had half a dozen children, first cousins of mine; but, as they had been brought up in the strict orthodox way in England regarding anything American, I was not inclined to search them out, or even make known to them my unfortunate circumstances.

Then there was my mother's family—which at the best was small and scattered. Her only brother had been a lukewarm partisan before the war; and at one time he had been nearly executed by the enraged citizens of Boston, because, early in the conflict, he seemed to give aid and sympathy to the British. He protested his innocence, and was permitted to live; but the mischievous boys of Boston burned him in effigy and hooted him on the streets. His patriotism was doubted by many to the last; but, when the colonists began to establish their power on land and sea, James Cunningham developed an intense patriotism. No man was more energetic than he in denouncing the English, and in proclaiming the rights of the struggling patriots. 'Tis true there were those who looked with suspicion upon this change; but others were blinded by his assumed patriotism and stood ready to follow him.

He was a man of affairs and business, shrewd and circumspect, and understood enough of human nature to influence for his personal gain those who came in contact with him. He owned large shipbuilding docks at Boston, and was rapidly amassing an im-

mense fortune. I had disliked him from the first because of his turncoat politics; and I decided I would not write any news of my parents' death to him.

There was not much choice in this list of near relatives; pride forbade me to turn to any of them. Had Uncle William been in America it is possible that I should have sought him out. Tory though he was from toe to crown of head, he was, nevertheless, a man of sterling principles and honest qualities. He had honestly believed that England was right and the colonies wrong; and he had remained true to his cause even when the fortunes of war went so heavily against him.

When the double funeral of my parents was over, and I had returned to the old homestead, the loneliness and helplessness of my position appeared to my mind in full force for the first time. But as I stood gazing with sad, tearless eyes upon the scenes that had so often yielded pleasure, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned to face Mr. Brewer, whose kindly smile relieved the sorrow that was tugging at my heart.

"Allin, my lad," he said, "you know you always have a home with me. Your father was a dear friend of mine, and his son shall never lack for a roof to sleep under while I have one. Come with me to-night, and Edith and I will comfort ye."

For a moment I looked steadily toward the broad bosom of the Connecticut—a blinding mist hanging heavily before my eyes. When I spoke, I said in heartfelt gratitude:

"That I will, Mr. Brewer, for a time. This house frightens me; I cannot stay in it again. I would sleep in the woodshed rather than go in it another night. Let me go with you for a week; then I will start out to seek my fortune."

"Tut! tut! lad, you're only a baby yet. What can you do to seek a fortune?"

I shook my head slowly and answered, without thought of boasting:

"I am young in years, Mr. Brewer, but I can make my way in the world. What other lads have done, that I can do, God helping me."

"I don't doubt that, Allin, but there is no need for it. Didn't I tell you my home is yours?"

"Yes, but I can't be living with you always. I must begin sooner or later to show what is in me, and it is better to make the break now."

Mr. Brewer walked along by my side in silence for a few moments, then broke out abruptly, touching me on the shoulder:

"I like your spirit, Allin, and shall not undertake to suppress it; but God knows I should like to do something for my old friend's child. And Edith, I fear, will be heart-broken at losing her old play-mate. But if you think it best to go hence, I shall put no obstacle in your way. Go or stay, as you think best, lad, and may God help you wherever you go."

I felt the fine qualities of this offer, and knew the heart of the man who spoke. For a time I could not answer, and waited for him to continue.

“ But what had you in mind, Allin? I fear there will be little coming to you from the farm, for it is heavily mortgaged, and farm sales are slow hereabouts. I have not much ready cash myself, but I can start you out with a little.”

“ I had thought of going to Boston,” I answered slowly. “ If you could help me to get there, I might secure work and return the money to you soon. I understand there is a great demand for strong men in the shipbuilding yards, and young lads for sailors. I might ship before the mast if I could not secure work on land.”

“ Would that be to your liking, Allin? Remember a sailor’s life is a hard one. He never knows what may happen to him after he leaves port. Many have gone forth, and few have returned. The seas are full of dangers to poor sailors under the American flag. We have little protection from the pirates or the French or English. ’Tis a shame that they commit such outrages upon our sailors, but we are unable to stop it.”

“ I did not say that I would go to sea,” I replied evasively. “ If I could get work in the shipyards I might stay on land. I think I have a gift for building boats, and I know that I love the work.”

“ Other lads have thought the same thing, and have found out their mistake afterwards. ’Tis an easy step from the shipyard to the ship, and many take it without thinking. There is a fascination in the salt water that gets into the blood, then ’tis that few can resist its leadings. But Providence guides

us, and it may be that you are taking the right step. We must wait and see ; but do nothing rash, Allin."

This was good advice given, and by a kindly mind. We strolled to the edge of the river, and across its shimmering surface Edith, my old playmate, stood waiting for us. 'Twas near dusk when we reached the opposite bank, and in the gloaming the three of us walked up to the house, where half my sorrow was forgotten. No fairer playmate, nor more earnest friend, ever shared another's grief ; and 'twas this that made the future less hopeless and blank on that day of change.

CHAPTER II.

'TIS YOUNG LOVE THAT HOLDS.

THE week following I counted the saddest, yet pleasantest of life, so intricate are our passions and emotions. 'Twas rendered sad by the shadow of the past—remembrances of which continued to hover over me; but the daily presence of Edith compensated in a measure for the grief that had visited me. 'Twas an interim between the past and future—an interval that spanned boyhood and manhood. Edith was not less affected by the change; 'twas as if she showed the trend of her thoughts in her quiet, half-sad demeanor. Neither was the gay, romping child of a week before, but a matured person, suddenly conscious of life's seriousness.

For some strange reason the old sports and pastimes failed of their fascination. Up and down the grassy banks of the river we wandered, drifting idly down stream in our boat, or climbing the distant wooded hills to watch the sun set; but 'twas all done quietly and sedately, with none of the wild enthusiasm or spontaneous outbursts of joy and laughter. Yet in a measure the quietness of our association brought new charm and joy into our

lives. Something we held yesterday had been lost, but we had gained a new happiness. Then I knew that Edith, and not the river, or fields or flowers, had given me peace and contentment on the farm. This truth dawned slowly, yet I turned it away with a sigh—not wishing to face it—for on the morrow we were to part.

On the bank of the river we were sitting, watching the flashing of the sunlight on the rippling waves. Edith's blue eyes were turned toward the opposite shore, where the shadows of departing day were already creeping up from the river's edge.

"To-morrow I shall be well on my way to Boston at this hour," I said abruptly, breaking silence.

I thought she shivered slightly, and seemed to shrink back.

"Do you mind my going, Edith?" I asked boldly when she did not reply.

"I shall miss you, Allin, more than you will me," she confessed with unexpected frankness.

"'Tis not so," I made quick reply. "You will have a quiet and pleasant time here, with the river and the woods, and everything we love; but I shall be among strangers, and probably cold and hungry half the time. You will not miss me for long, while I shall always think of you, Edith."

Instead of answering this protest, as I expected, with words of remonstrance, she turned her head toward me slowly, and asked:

"Allin, are you going to sea?"

There was an uneasy expression in her eye, a look

of anxiety that I noted, and thought, rightly, was on my account. So I hastened to answer, with a little of the bravado spirit that ill became me at the time :

“ I don’t know. If I get desperate I may. There is always a chance on the sea for a young fellow to distinguish himself,—the picaroons of the West Indies to fight, new discoveries to be made, and the English and French to resist. If an English officer should attempt to impress me into the service, I should fight to the death rather than yield. I would die fighting, and never serve under the English flag. If our sailors would do that more we would have less of this impressment. ’Tis nothing but high-handed robbery, and it is high time it stopped. Who are we that English officers on the sea should claim us for sailors just because they take a fancy to us? Of course they know we are better fighters than their own deserters ; that’s why they take us. But it must stop.”

This speech I thought would impress Edith, and, in truth, she did look bewildered and frightened.

“ Don’t talk of fighting, Allin,” she pleaded. “ I fear you will get killed some day. It is time for peace now ; we’ve had the war, and we want no more. I don’t want you to go to sea to fight the pirates or English. Stay on land for my sake, Allin.”

There was an appeal in her voice that drew me ; but before I could speak she added in more commanding tones :

“ You must not go to sea ! Something will happen,

and you will be captured by the English, or be shut up in a Barbary prison and made a slave. No, Allin, you must not go to sea. I won't let you go!"

This sudden spirit of determination surprised me; but I liked it, nevertheless. There was new beauty in the face, and a new sparkle in the eyes, turned toward me.

"Do you understand, Allin?" she continued, "I won't let you go! You must stay on land, and make a name for yourself here. Your father did, and you can, too. Your country needs you as it did your father."

Could this be my quiet little playmate laying down such terms? For a moment I looked at her in admiration, and I would have spoken in self-defence; but she would not listen. Without heeding my words, she added more emphatically:

"You must promise me to-night that you will never go to sea. 'Twould break my heart to know that you were on some ship with dangers all around you. I would lie awake nights and think of you. You will promise me, Allin, won't you? I know you will!"

There was no resisting such appeal; and yet a look at the coy head and shining eyes tempted me to protest further.

"That is asking a good deal, Edith," I replied, gravely. "It might ruin my prospects in life. If I should get a good offer on a ship, I would owe it to myself to accept. Everybody who wants to make a career for himself goes to sea nowadays. Boston is

full of young sea captains,—some of them under twenty. I can go to sea without falling in with pirates. I could go for seals and whales, and come back in a few years rich. I might discover some new land, and my name would be famous. Did you read in the Boston papers your father received yesterday of young Captain Palmer, of Stonington? He was only fourteen when he went to sea in the *Herselias*, and in four years he was made second mate of the brig. He discovered the South Shetland Islands on his next voyage out, and brought back ten thousand seal skins that made him rich. When he got home he was made captain of a sloop, and sent to the South Seas again. Wouldn't you be proud if I should come back here before I was twenty, and ask you to marry Captain Allin Winfield of the brig *Edith*?"

To this question, put half in seriousness and half in jest, Edith answered promptly:

"No, I would never marry Captain Allin Winfield of the brig *Edith*. I know that I would not like him."

"Then," I answered slowly, "I would go back to sea, and find pirates and English to fight to keep me busy."

"I didn't say that I wouldn't marry you, Allin," she said quickly. "Come back to me simply as Allin, and not as Captain Allin, and I—shall be here to welcome you."

She turned her head to hide her confusion, and I responded heartily: "Then Edith I will give you

my promise. I will not go to sea,—not of my own accord.”

“Then you will not go at all; for nobody can force you, Allin, you’re so stubborn.”

She laughed merrily, thus speaking: and as we trudged back to the house something of the old enthusiasm seemed to come into our spirits.

CHAPTER III.

CUTTING LOOSE FROM OLD SCENES.

'Tis always an important event in a lad's life to leave home to begin life in a new place amongst strangers. However light-hearted he may be, there will come moments when he must think in sorrow of the past. Yet boyish enthusiasm anticipates the future ; and with no little pleasure I looked forward to the coming change ; 'twas as if a new world lay before me, with the power in my grasp to conquer it.

Boston, with its prosperous shipbuilding trade, and its numerous ships that sailed to all ports of the world, was the Mecca of all adventurous youths. 'Twas larger and more progressive than New York—the only city I had ever visited—and the spirit of freedom and independence was more rife there than elsewhere. Thither my father had first repaired when the call to arms had been made ; and 'twas in Boston that he had received his commission.

'Twas of this city that I had often heard, and tales of its wondrous ships, from Hannah Wooster, who had served so long and faithfully on the Winfield estate before the death of its owner. Her only son had been a sailor up to the time of his last eventful

cruise—a cruise from which he had never returned. All had been mystery after that. Whether the deep had opened to swallow him up, or whether he was in some Barbary prison, or throwing in his lot with the pirates of the Spanish main, none could more than guess. His mother had brooded for a season over his absence and then drawn her conclusions in this wise :

“He’s been captured by the pirates of the West Indies, but some day he’ll come home.”

’Twas not sufficient to confess this; ’twas necessary to weave a story of his adventures, and then rehearse the details of his capture and the pain he was suffering. Out of her own imagination she invented harrowing tales of the sea and land, in which John Wooster always figured as the hero. These tales of adventures quieted the pain of her own heart (good soul that she was), and brought delight and terror to my active, imaginative mind. The fictitious adventures of our common hero brought tears and rejoicings to both story-teller and listener, and often in the quiet gloaming of the evening we would mutually bewail his fate or rejoice at his escape.

Hannah’s vivid but uncultivated imagination was then an absorbing book of romance for me ; her tales brought new scenes and thoughts into my narrow life. Before this my imagination had been confined to the struggle between England and her colonies ; now my mind traversed the Spanish main and the waters and prisons of the Barbary states in quick succession. Good John’s adventures carried him to

the cold, frozen north ; to idyllic South Sea islands ; to summer oceans where skies were eternally clear and bright ; and to lands where incense and music lulled the senses to sleep.

These scenes opened a new world of thought and meditation ; and under the forest trees I would dream through the tales again, reconstructing them to suit my own boyish fancy, but through them all stalked the stalwart figure of John Wooster, who was the rightful hero of this fairy land beyond the sea. It never occurred to me that the form I was conjuring up was not that of the mythical John, but my own. 'Twould have seemed a sacrilege to dispossess John of his hard-earned laurels ; so not once did I betray him in word or thought.

This land of the imagination had compensated in a degree for the loneliness of life on the farm ; and I had drawn fancy pictures of the future. Down by the brink of the river I launched ships of wood to sail away upon dangerous voyages ; many of them being dispatched with a goodly crew to rescue John from the hands of the pirates.

The river was then an unknown and untraversed ocean to me, stretching far beyond the islands of the coast, and washing the shores of lands that peopled strange creatures. On its rippling surface I could study the pictures of the fancy, which a thousand waves seemed to reflect and cast upon the beach. There were wondrous dangers to encounter on that sea that knew no bounds ; strange people and islands to discover ; fleets and armadas of war and treasure

to capture, and adventures of storm and shipwreck to meet. There had been irresistible fascination in the river that drew me to its edge whenever a new story of sea adventure was told.

We were out of the line of all stage-coaches which plied between Boston and New York, but boats, ascending the Connecticut every week or two, brought the mail and newspapers from the former city. 'Twas from the perusal of these that I had gleaned most of my knowledge of the shipbuilding and shipping interests of the city. Not a day passed, it seemed, but some lordly ship passed from the stocks into the water to increase the large merchant fleet that flew the American flag. From pictures and descriptions in the papers I could easily imagine the size and beauty of these swift clippers, brigs, and sloops. I had often found myself dwelling upon the pleasure of a sea-captain's life; vaguely longing for the time when I might pace the quarter-deck of a merchantman or warship as its commander. I did not realize how strong a hold this sort of life had taken of me till the day of my departure. I awoke early that morning, and shuddered at the thought that I had promised Edith never to go to sea. Hastily dressing, I determined to ask her to release me from such promise. But other things occupied my mind, and I dismissed it until too late. How great an influence that promise had upon my after-life will be seen later.

Mr. Brewer and Edith accompanied me to the boat landing, two miles down the river, where the flat-bottom river-boat *Hartford* was to touch, and take me

aboard. 'Twas decided that the quickest route would be down the Connecticut by boat to Hartford, and then by the regular stage-coach to Boston. This seemed a roundabout journey, and made a long trip; but Mr. Brewer, who had been to Boston several times, recommended it, and, in fact, planned and paid for the whole trip. This I found out after I was too far away to thank him in person.

"Here, my lad, is a wallet with some money to give you a start in life," he said, as he left me at the dock. "Spend it wisely; and, if you have no work when it is gone, write me, and I will try to send you more."

I tried to express my gratitude, even refusing at first to accept the gift; but he was in earnest and insistent.

"And here," he then added, "are your father's private papers and letters. As his executor I might keep them until you are of age, but I think it wise to hand them over to you now. Read them over at your leisure and preserve them carefully. Let no one else have them. Some day they may be of service to you."

The letters were done up in a neat package, wrapped in tight oil-skin cloth. This, with my small bundle of extra clothing, made no formidable package; and, when it was deposited on the deck of the flat-bottom boat, might have been mistaken for my dinner. But I was not concerned about the size or value of my worldly possessions. I stood watching the receding figures of Mr. Brewer and Edith, till a bend in the river shut them entirely from view.

Then, with tears in my eye, I turned to notice my companions for the first time. By my side stood the captain of the poorly-constructed craft, who said with a nod over the stern :

“ Them yer folks—sister an’ father ? ”

I answered briefly in the negative.

“ Yer little sweetheart then ?—Waal, she’s a putty little ’un.”

I did not like this rough remark, nor the loud laugh which followed ; but, as the man was not repelling in his manners, I kept back an angry reply. After a moment or two he added :

“ This is yer first time away from home, I judge, ain’t it ? I thought so. Waal, ye’ll soon get yer eyes opened ; ye ain’t a sleepy kind—like some o’ these youngsters up country. Where ye goin’ to—New York or Boston ? ”

“ Boston,” I replied.

“ Then ye’re goin’ to sea, I’ll bet ; that’s where all the lads go when they gets there. I don’t blame ’em either ; I’d go myself if I was young again ; ’tis better ’n runnin’ up an’ down this river. I know them what’s made lot’s of money sealin’ and whalin’. There’s Captain Barry, of the sloop *Dolphin*, he’s a man clean through, no better ever trod the deck of a ship, an’ he’s makin’ money—lot’s of it. When I was up to Boston—last year comin’ next Christmas—I met him at Cunningham’s dock, an’ he told me he’d brought back a small fortune in whale oil, an’ that he warn’t goin’ to stay a day longer on land than he could help. He’d get back an’ bring more

whale oil home. He kinder made me feel young an' ambitious again, an' I 'most agreed to ship with him. Hadn't been fur this old river craft being on my hand I would have gone, an' I ain't sure but I was a fool not goin' anyhow, river craft or no."

The man rubbed his stubbly beard reflectively, casting a glance down stream; then in a thick, commanding voice bawled:

"Hey there! you dummy at the pole! don't ye see that flag a-wavin' at Brown's dock? Bring her in, an' don't be goin' to sleep on duty! Ye'll be a-ruinin' me at this rate! There's good cargo awaitin' us; an' ye tryin' to sneak past it! What d' ye s'pose I pay ye fur?"

These sentences, rolled out rapidly, were directed toward the man at the tiller; but they did not seem to affect that individual seriously, except to make him bring the flat craft slowly toward the opposite shore. The fluttering flag ahead indicated that there was another passenger or some cargo for the *Hartford*.

"Ye have to keep yer eyes on these fellows," the captain added, turning to me, and winking; "they ain't takin' in no more cargo than they can help. They're lazy by nature, and practice doesn't improve 'em much. I jes' have to keep a strict discipline on board o' this craft, an' the men knows it. That was Captain Barry's strong point, too; he was a man of parts, but he was a disciplinarin more'n anything else. He was boss of his ship when she left port, an' God Almighty wouldn't had much to say on board o' her when Captain Barry was out of sorts.

An' he was mostly out of sorts, except when he was full of good rum, which, I'm thankful to say, wasn't often; or when he was on land. Then he was as meek as a lamb. He warn't no use on land; any one could lead him astray, an' make him believe green cheese was salt pork. If he stayed on land more 'n a few weeks at a time, he'd give away every cent he had to the shysters who'd come to him beggin', knowin' his weakness in that line."

"He must have been very kind-hearted," I suggested as the captain hesitated.

"Kind-hearted, hey? Waal, he'd give his best friend his ship if he told him he needed it. They say he never got married because he gave his best girl away. Jim Hayes, who was in love with her too, came to him an' told him that he'd commit suicide if Captain Barry married her. Waal, the captain takes it all in, an' says he'd give her up to him, an', to make matters clean sailin' fur Jim, he goes to sea on a long voyage without a word of explanation. When he comes back three years later Jim's married to the girl the captain loved. Jim was an ungrateful cuss, an' when he next sees the captain he says: 'That was a neat trick of yours, Captain Barry, but 'twasn't necessary. I found out that Sally loved me after all, an' laughed at the idea of ever even considerin' you.'"

"Captain Barry didn't say nothin', but he felt it, an' was all cut up. I think he loves Sally Hayes to-day, an' he's jes' fool enough to believe what Jim Hayes told him 'bout her never havin' cared for him.

Humph! the idea of comparin' Captain Barry with that Jim Hayes!"

The loquacious captain's disgust silenced further talk for some time, and a few minutes later we bumped up alongside of Brown's dock. 'Twas not another passenger, but some heavy freight—made up chiefly of dried skins and furs of the trappers—that awaited our arrival. These were soon rolled on the flat deck of the *Hartford*; and once more we drifted down stream.

During this novel journey down the river, I ate my meals with the captain, and occupied the rude bed in his cabin. He seemed to like to converse on all sorts of topics, especially those relating to the sea; and I gratified a longing curiosity to know more about ships and shipping by asking questions whenever he stopped. As most of these questions related to the sea or ships and sailors, he finally said:

"I thought I guessed right when I said you'd go down to Boston an' ship on the first craft what came along. But ye're a green up-country lad, an' ye'd better be careful who ye ship with. Sea captains ain't angels, an' some of 'em ain't hardly human. Ye jes' take the advice of an old one, who's knocked round a deal, an' knows a thing or two, an' don't ship with the first one that comes along. Jes' find out something 'bout him first; better go an' talk with the sailors who've sailed under him. If Captain Barry was in port, I'd send ye to him, but he won't be back fur a year. Ye ain't got no friends or relatives in Boston, I s'pose?"

"I have an uncle there that I've never seen; he's in the shipping business," I replied. "Mr. Cunningham is his name."

"James Cunningham! By the Lord Harry! lad, ye ain't goin' to him, be ye? An uncle o' yours, too? I wouldn't have thought, lookin' at ye, that ye had any o' his vile blood in ye! It ain't cropped out yet, anyway; that I can tell by your looks, but I s'pose it will tell sooner or later. If ye were a lad o' mine, an' I knew ye'd grow into a man like Jim Cunningham, the law permittin', I'd drop ye overboard here an' hold ye under till ye was stark dead. Yes, by the Lord Harry! I'd do it, the law permittin' me or not!"

The captain brought his fist down in the palm of his hand with a swing that would have felled an ox, and the flash in his eyes made me step back a little. I realized instantly the mistake I had made in confessing my relationship with my mother's brother. In my ignorance I had supposed that this piece of information would impress the captain with my position in the world, for I had understood that my Uncle Cunningham was a man of wealth and power in Boston. I stood aghast for a moment, my face red and excited, but I managed to blurt out:

"He's my uncle, but I'm not going to him. He has never treated my mother as his sister, and I *hate* him. But he is the only blood relation I have in Boston, except his children."

The captain eyed me a moment in silence; then said heartily, grasping me by the hand:

“That’s the way to begin life, my lad. Any one that’s treated yer mother wrong, *hate* him; an’ ye have good reason to hate yer uncle. Don’t go to him in Boston; and, above all, don’t go on one of his ships.”

“Does he own many ships?” I asked quickly.

“Scores of ’em. He’s one of the biggest shippers in Boston. The Cunningham docks are the largest in the country, and he builds a dozen a year. He’s a man of power, but he’s a bad man, and only has bad men under him. His captains are the toughs from every country, not one of ’em a true Yankee; an’ they bribe, steal an’ smuggle their sailors aboard, an’ then treat ’em like cattle. They ought to hang for it, and the first one to be hung should be Jim Cunningham.”

Again the eyes and fist gave emphasis to the words, and he even paced up and down the deck several times to quiet his agitation, which the very name of my uncle seemed to excite.

“See here, lad,” he began suddenly, stopping in front of me; “if you want to start right in this business, an’ not get on the wrong tack, jes’ look up William Graystone, who owns the best line of clip-pers between Boston and Liverpool, and tell him that Captain Ben Swanson, of the *Hartford*, sent ye. He’s an honest man, an’ a good trainer for youngsters. I ain’t got much influence with him, but if he’s got a berth on any of his ships open, he’ll put ye under a captain what knows how to run a ship an’ treat his men decent.”

"But I don't want to go to sea," I suddenly blurted out, remembering my promise, "or I can't go; that is, I've promised not to."

"Then what have ye been plyin' me with these questions 'bout the sea for?"

"Because I was interested, and I want to know more about ships. I should like to go into a shipyard and learn to build them. I think I have some taste for that work."

"Wa-al, maybe ye have; an' there ain't nothing better fur a lad to have than a knack for ship-building. Ye jes' go to William Graystone, an' tell him that. Mention my name, an' he'll give ye a berth in his shipyard. He builds some of the finest clippers afloat, an' Captain Barry's *Dolphin* is one of 'em."

IV.

WHEN BOSTON WAS YOUNG.

REACHING Hartford, Captain Ben Swanson went ashore with me to see that I got started right on my journey to Boston. 'Twas early morning when the lumbering stage-coach arrived from New York, and then, after a change of horses, I took my place in the vehicle, and the long overland trip was begun. The country was soft and green in its spring dress, but the roads were often muddy and rough, making progress slow and difficult.

When we finally reached Boston 'twas late in the evening of the third day. Before me opened the doors of Carroll's Tavern. I knew it from reputation as suited only for prosperous merchants. I would have sought cheaper lodgings had not the porter, in his most insulting way, exclaimed :

"Ye'll get lodgings just round the corner; we don't take any but gentlemen here."

There was a laugh from the circle of grinning youngsters at this sally, and the blood mounted to my forehead. With sudden impulse I flung my package on the ground, and said sharply :

"Here you, porter; take my things and show me

to one of your best rooms. Be quick about it, too, or I'll report you to your master!"

There was a look of blank astonishment on the man's face, and my ears caught the laugh of the crowd at the discomfiture of the man as I swung open the door of the tavern and entered. My presence and appearance, I knew, were not calculated to impress the landlord favorably without a show of money; and so, with what nonchalance I could command, I threw down a gold sovereign, and said:

"Give me one of your best rooms, with plenty of light, and have my luggage sent up at once. I want supper, too, as quick as you can serve it. I'm as hungry and tired as those coach horses. 'Tis a long trip from New York, and the roads are heavy and muddy."

"Yes, 'tis a very tiresome trip," replied my sleek-looking landlord. "Did you come alone?"

"Alone? Of course not. Didn't you see the coach was full? And my friend, Alexander Hamilton, was with me. Didn't you see him talking with me? He's a great man in New York."

With this attempt at acting I turned abruptly away, following the now sullen but obsequious porter to my room. 'Twas a beautiful chamber, overlooking the harbor, furnished in oak and mahogany, and with fine English chintz curtains at the window. When the porter deposited my small package on the table, I waved him to leave, telling him not to disturb me till supper was ready.

As this was my first night in Boston, I call special

attention to it by way of contrast with many other nights when I scarce had enough food to eat, and no lodging of any character to cover my head. I lived like a lord that night, eating one of the best suppers that Carroll's Tavern could prepare, and enjoying the luxury of a bed and surroundings that left a pleasant remembrance in mind for many days after. 'Twas a piece of extravagance that I could ill afford, but I flattered myself that it was well worth a few days of close economy. My arrival, and first night, in the town that was to be my future home, were at least propitious. With the companionship of one of the foremost political leaders of the day on my trip, and supper and lodgings at Carroll's Tavern, I felt that I had enough triumph for one day. So, in spite of the thought that half my money was gone, I slept pleasantly and comfortably in my expensive bed.

The morning's awakening brought thoughts of the day that was ahead. I lay for some time enjoying the peace and quietness of the luxurious chamber; 'twas all so pleasant that I would hold it as long as possible. But youth is strong, hopeful and ambitious, and in less than two hours I had quietly slipped away from Carroll's tavern to begin the difficult task of securing work. My footsteps were naturally directed toward the water front, where a perfect forest of tapering masts and spars of ships met my gaze, and beyond which I could see others anchored in the harbor, ready to take the first favoring breeze and tide out. Others were crossing the harbor and making for the docks, returning, I suppose, from long

journeys, loaded with cargoes of great value. I stood a full hour watching this pretty marine view, fascinated by some subtle influence that seemed to lay hold of me when near the sea. Finally, I turned away with a sigh, remembering that I had work to secure and time was passing. I needed no clock to remind me of this, for my stomach was already rebelling at the light breakfast I had given it, although 'twas then scarce ten in the morning.

The sound of hammering in the distance reached my ears, and, following along the docks, I soon discovered that it came from the shipbuilding yards beyond. With new eagerness I hastened my footsteps. To my disappointment I found a high wooden fence shut off outsiders, and all I could do was to peer through the cracks and knot-holes. There were several ships on the stays in various degrees of completion, with hundreds of boys and men running about them like monkeys. Some were pounding continuously with hammers, others were sawing and fitting, and a few seemed to be measuring and marking on the framework for the carpenters to follow. Huge derricks were lifting immense timbers and buttresses in position, and on the deck of one large clipper they were just in the act of stepping the mast. This long, slender pole must have been a giant among the trees of the forest, for in its dressed form it seemed larger than a man's body and seventy feet long. As it swung an instant in mid-air in the grip of the powerful derrick my breath came slowly and I gripped the board fence tightly. Then, as the

enormous butt dropped into position and the men gave way, I clapped my hands with glee. The thing had been done so neatly that I felt all the glow of satisfaction that the builder must have experienced. In my absorption I had not noticed the approach of any one, but as I turned abruptly about I faced a young man of twenty or thereabout gazing at me with an amused smile. He was dressed in the height of fashion, with silver buttons on his coat, gold braid on his soft felt hat, and solid metal buckles on his pointed shoes.

"Well, young fellow, what do you want here, I'd like to know?" he asked in an offensive tone.

At first I was inclined not to answer; then, thinking better of it, I replied coolly:

"Taking my first lesson in shipbuilding."

He looked puzzled at first, but recovering himself, added:

"So you intend to be a shipbuilder? What qualifications have you for such a serious undertaking?"

"Far more than you have to be my inquisitor," I answered, exasperated at his manners and words.

He laughed instead of showing signs of anger, saying:

"You would make a better sea captain than a shipbuilder, I warrant. You have the ways and manners of one."

I was at a loss whether to take this as a compliment or a refined insult, so I answered with equal uncertainty of expression:

"That depends upon the class of captains and ships you're accustomed to."

"Well, such ships and captains as they have in this yard, which you seem so mightily interested in," was the rejoinder.

"Oh, they're too good for you," I returned shortly, walking away to avoid further argument, which might lead to something more serious than talk. His next words arrested my attention, making me regret that I had been so quick in retort.

"But this shipbuilding yard and all the ships and captains in it belong to me, or rather to my father, which is about the same thing, seeing that I am his only son."

I drew a long breath and looked scrutinizingly at him to see if he was in earnest.

"Does that surprise you?" he asked with a smirk of triumph.

I made no reply, but continued to move away. 'Twas beneath my dignity to ask for a position from one with whom I had just received and passed such uncivil words.

"Are you going?" he asked, and I detected a shade of disappointment in his voice. "If you asked permission you might go inside of the yard and look at some of the ships we are building."

I glanced instinctively toward the yard, but still made no indication of a desire to be civil.

"Well, if you don't care to go in you can stay out. I've made you the offer."

'Twas his turn now to withdraw, and I replied with some show of eagerness :

“I will accept your offer and thank you for it ; for I am very anxious to see more of the shipbuilding trade, and even to take a hand at it some day.”

“That’s coming back to where we started in our quarrel. If you had not been so quick to take me up you might have learned something to your advantage. When you spoke of taking your first lesson in shipbuilding I was interested. The fact is, we are in need of apprentice lads, and I thought very likely you would suit if you liked the trade so well.”

My heart seemed to rise in my throat, and suddenly my feelings for the young dandy underwent a change. I could see nothing but my own foolishness in provoking the unpleasant remarks.

We walked along rapidly toward the large entrance, my companion assuming a little swaggering and condescending air that I readily overlooked, now that I saw the prospect of employment in such a shipyard. He told of the ships they had built and of the fortunes they had brought back from different parts of the earth. When we reached the entrance I glanced up at the imposing arch, made of two ship-spars, with another crossed at right angles. Then suddenly I stopped.

“What’s the matter now, I’d like to know?” demanded the young dandy impatiently. “Have you seen a ghost?”

“No ; but I cannot enter that shipyard,” I answered. He muttered an emphatic imprecation, but I turned

sharply on my heels and walked away. Over the gate entrance swung a large sign, with these significant words:

JAMES CUNNINGHAM & SON,
SHIPBUILDERS AND SHIPWRIGHTS.

V.

LONG JIM'S VALIANT OFFER.

STRAIGHT from my Uncle Cunningham's docks I went to the shipbuilding yard of William Graystone, which I stumbled upon in the same blind fashion that had led me into the very presence of my cousin. With face flushed and burning over the little episode with my uncle's only son, I suddenly found myself facing a sign swinging noisily in the wind, with the simple legend painted on it in small letters :

PRIVATE YARD AND DOCKS OF

WILLIAM GRAYSTONE.

I needed no further clue, but instantly concluded that my quest was at an end. Applying at the huge gate for the master of the shipyard, I was bluntly told that he was busy. Could I see him in a short time? Not unless my business was important. Exasperated at the man's interference, I said proudly :

"I was sent here by Captain Ben Swanson, of the *Hartford*, and I want to see either the master of the yard or Mr. Graystone."

"Never heard of such a captain," responded the watchman. "Does he sail one o' the ships here?"

"No," I replied a little less importantly, "but he's a friend of Mr. Graystone."

"Well, Mr. Graystone is in New York, an' won't return for a fortnight. You might call when he returns."

A whole fortnight! My money would be gone long ere that, and for a moment I regretted the reckless extravagance at Carroll's Tavern.

"But can I not see the master of the yard?" I persisted.

"Not to-day; he's busy, an' won't see anybody. Come to-morrow."

After this futile attempt to reach the head authorities of the shipyard, I decided it was better to make my errand known to the watchman, who might set me on the right track for securing work.

"Have you many vacancies in the yard?" I asked, by way of breaking the ground gradually for the question that was uppermost in my mind.

"Not very often," was the unsatisfactory reply. "We're full now, an' have several waitin' for a chance. If it's to get a position here that you're waitin' to see the master for, you'd better not waste your time."

"But Mr. Graystone will find a place for me, if I tell him who I am and who sent me," I answered, with all the show of spirit that I could command.

"That may be, but he generally only takes 'em that has merit; and if you have that, he may give you a chance."

With this prospect in view, my ambition soared

less loftily than in the morning. Work of some kind was necessary before many days, and I would have been contented then to have carried timbers for a few odd pence and shillings. Disappointed at my reception at the shipyards, I walked toward the shipping-wharves where scores of vessels were loading and unloading their cargoes. The place was crowded with an active, restless people of puzzling character. The laboring men, in their tight leathern breeches and checked shirts, were the most numerous. They crowded back and forth on the narrow streets, rolling huge hogsheads and bales of goods to and from the ships, and handling derricks and cranes that swung back and forth with heavy weights, fished from the holds of the ships. Conspicuous in the crowd also were the sailors. Some were young and only half formed in stature—mere lads out of school—and others were past middle age, with the hard lines and wrinkles of a rough life seamed on their faces. There were handsome young officers in uniform, a captain or two with rings in the ears, and richly-dressed owners of ships and cargoes, merchants whose goods were being trusted to the uncertain mercies of the seas, dock clerks and town officers—all mixed and jostled together. In this motley crowd I was not noticed. I might have easily passed for one of the deck hands, or an idler come down to see the loading of some favorite ship for a distant port. After watching the scene for a few moments, I took a seat on one of the spiles and sighed. If I could not secure work in building ships, I might at least go

as a sailor and see the ports of the world. My thoughts must have been stamped on my face, for a man at my side suddenly asked:

“Want to go to sea, my lad, on one of the best ships that ever left Boston harbor? She's the *Foaming Crest*, built by James Cunningham, an' as staunch a craft as ever floated. Bound for China ports with a mixed cargo. Take ye clean round the world, an' bring ye back with a load of tea. Good chance for a likely lad o' your build. Put ye down as one of the crew? Ever ship before? No? Well, every man's got to go first time an' learn the ropes. Nice captain you'll have—William Barclay, of Stonington. Never ill-treated a sailor yet; record's clean as a whistle. Name, please, and age?”

The man was a tall, gaunt, seafaring type, with rings in ears, a beaked nose, and a skin tanned the color of dark leather. His beady eyes never seemed to notice me, but I knew they were taking me in at every shift. His words rolled out so rapidly that I did not have time to catch my breath until he asked my name and age. Then, remembering my promise to Edith, and Captain Swanson's warning about shipping with strangers whose record I knew nothing about, I said bluntly:

“I'm not going to sea. I'm looking for work on land.”

“What! Stay home and work on land when ye have the glorious opportunity to go to sea! What are the lads o' this generation coming to? When I was a lad we crossed the ocean whenever we got a

chance. I ran away at ten to ship before the mast, an' I never regretted it. Look at me now! What do you think I'd be to-day if I'd stayed at home? Of course ye want to go to sea; 'tis the only career open for an ambitious lad. Better change your mind. 'Tain't every lad that gets this opportunity. I selected ye because ye looked so big an' strong, that I knew ye'd make a good sailor. Ye have the makin' of a captain in ye. I'll take odds with ye that ye'll be an officer before ye're twenty. Will ye take it?"

I was amused, and, if I do confess it, a little flattered at the man's words, and I replied with more show of good nature:

"I'll bet you that I won't be a captain at twenty-five, and make the bet anything you like, for I'm not going to sea."

The beady eyes stopped a moment and seemed to look me through. Then the owner replied:

"Landlubber it is, then! Every man to his taste. Can't all be seamen. I have a brother just like you. Can't coax him into a row-boat. He's always lived on land, an' he'll die on land. But what kind of work do ye want?"

"I should like to try my hand at shipbuilding," I replied quickly. "It isn't because I don't like the sea that I refuse to go. But I must stay on land."

"I thought so; I never failed yet to read the seaman in any lad. I knew soon's I sot eyes on ye that ye liked the sea. The next best thing to going is to build boats for others to go in. You'll do it well,

too, I'll warrant. Well, come right along, an' I'll see that ye get what you wants. Where are ye living?"

"I left Carroll's Tavern this morning," I answered, taking delight in seeing the beady eyes open wider and rest their keen gaze on me. "But I shan't put up there again. I'm going to look for new lodgings to-day."

"Luck is with ye then, for I've got just the thing for ye. Captain Barclay's brother keeps a small sailors' tavern over here, an' he's that kind-hearted enough to give ye good lodgings for little pay. In fact, he'll keep ye a few days till ye get work, an' then ye can pay him when ye've made something. He trusts them that trusts him, an' I'll vouch for ye. I know ye're honest."

It seemed as if fortune was with me at last; but, as I did not particularly like the looks of the man, I felt a little suspicious.

"What about the work in a shipyard?" I asked. "Did you say that you could get me a position?"

"I never promise things I can't fulfil," he replied, "an' I don't promise ye what ye ask. But I'll say that if I don't get ye a position in one before to-morrow at this time I'll pay the cost of your lodgings for a fortnight."

I laughed at this odd speech, so well did it please me.

"I see that ye're minded to accept this offer," he added a moment later, "but ye'd do better to go to sea on the *Foaming Crest*."

"No, no," I answered without a shadow of a doubt.

“Lead me to Mr. Barclay’s Tavern; I’m both thirsty and hungry, and there we can talk business.”

“It is your own mistake you’re makin’ an’ not mine,” he said, shaking his head. “Don’t lay it up against me some day when all your friends are ship captains, an’ ye’re only a——”

“Rich shipbuilder,” I finished, interrupting him.

Mr. Barclay’s Tavern was about as ill looking and smelling a place as any on the docks; and as we entered the narrow doorway I cast an inquiring glance toward my companion, who interpreted it aright, and made explanation.

“It is a very modest tavern; Mr. Barclay is not rich. There you see it again. He’s a landlubber, wouldn’t go to sea, an’ is a poor man to-day. His brother, Captain Barclay, is rich; they say he owns more than enough to buy all the Barclays out for generations past.”

We approached the bar, where Mr. Barclay, who chose to stay on land and remain a poor man, was introduced to me. He was a poor specimen of a tavern-keeper, low-browed, heavy and thick-set, with arms like the masts of a ship, and eyes that I imagined could look murder if excited.

“Here’s another one of ’em that I can’t persuade to go to sea,” my friend said, “an’ I’ve promised him a position in the shipyards. Think I can get it for him, Bonny?”

“Just had a fellow in here an hour ago asking for a lad ’bout his age. He said he’d call in the mornin’ agin.”

The man jerked these words out as if his lips were glued together, and he had great difficulty in opening them. But the voice was deep and muttering when it did escape from between the lips.

“Luck—sure luck this time! You’re doom is sealed, my lad; you’re bound to become a landlubber. Now’s your last chance to think it over. Dream of it to-night an’ decide in the mornin’. It’s the parting of the ways; one leads to the sea and wealth, the other to the land and poverty. Which will you take? To-morrow morning I will have my answer. No, no, not to-night; sleep over it and decide at your leisure.”

He put a grimy, dirty hand over my mouth, as I essayed to speak; and then bowed himself out of the tavern, bidding me good-night.

VI.

A SAILOR HE WOULD MAKE OF ME.

LEFT alone with the tavern-keeper, I turned to find him gazing intently at me, the brief glance causing a disquieting sensation to steal over me. There was nothing prepossessing about him—not a redeeming feature. I instantly felt uncomfortable, and, as it was getting quite dark, I asked to be shown to my room. I was tired with the day's tramp and experiences and longed for a rest. This request, I saw, did not please my host, but distinctly put him off his guard.

“Ye ain't goin' to bed this time o' day, I hopes; for it ain't nothing but day yet,” he said, a little gruffly. “Ye ain't had no supper, nor nothing to drink. Let me get you something afore ye go.”

“I fear I have but little money to squander on supper and drink,” I said, honestly. “In fact, I'm down to my last pound.”

“That makes no difference here,” replied my landlord, tolerantly. “I stands treat to every guest that Long Jim brings here till he says stop. He's a good judge of character, Jim is, an' he's never made me lose a shilling yet. So ye can eat and drink to-night as his guest. Then when ye get work ye can come

aroun' an' spend some o' yer money in drinkin' my ale."

With treads like those of an elephant, he walked back and forth preparing my frugal repast. There was more of it than I would have ordered, considering the depleted state of my pocket-book; but compared to the meal I had enjoyed at Carroll's Tavern the night before, 'twas poor indeed. But to a hungry lad, after a day of tramping, it tasted sweet and refreshing. I cleaned my plate twice, and drained the contents of my ale mug thrice. Then with a feeling of satisfaction, I leaned back in my chair, thinking of the day's work and of the promise of the future. Eyelids seemed heavy, and the benumbing sense of sleep stole over me. I tried to arouse myself and throw off the stupor; but I found it impossible to control my muscles. My eyelids seemed determined to close in spite of desperate efforts to keep them open. The power of feeling, and all sensation, seemed to desert me. But at this supreme moment my mind worked rapidly, and rose superior to weak flesh. It dawned upon me that I had been drugged, and with a startled look I glanced toward my landlord. He was watching me as a cat watches a mouse, with just the suspicion of a smile lurking on his lips. That smile maddened me; and, with a superhuman effort, I sprang to my feet and started for the door. Before I could reach it, the burly form of Mr. Barclay intervened. It may have all been a dream; but I lunged out desperately at him with right fist and shouted:

"Out of my way, you scoundrel, or I'll knock you down."

I have reasons to believe that this was only a part of my vision, for instead of replying to this threat the man reached out his arms, and said :

"I'll show ye to your room now if you're so tired an' sleepy."

I know I felt the touch of his arms, and shrank back from them. Then of a sudden I lost consciousness.

I was strong and robust, and not easily overcome. A giant in size, as well as in strength, for a lad of my age, the drug had less effect on me than Mr. Barclay anticipated. It could not have been very long before I began to take cognizance of surroundings again ; but, brief as the time was, somebody had taken me to an inner chamber and put me on a bed. A tallow dip was burning in the room ; and by its light I could see that the place was almost bare of furnishings of any kind. I dared not move at first ; but slowly opened my eyes and rolled them about to take in the full situation without attracting attention. When I found that I was entirely alone in the room, I moved my head sufficiently to inspect everything. There was a rickety table and two chairs standing against the wall. On the table my small bundle had been placed near the flickering candle ; and from this fact I judged that robbery was not the motive of my enemies.

But what other reason any one could have for drugging me in a strange tavern, and putting me to

bed, was deep mystery. I lay there for some minutes, cudgeling brains for a satisfactory solution. Then voices in an adjacent room reached my ears. 'Twas the landlord and Long Jim, his friend, and, as I began to believe, my seducer, talking.

"What time does she sail anyway? It's gettin' late, an' ye ought to carry him aboard afore he wakes."

"Not necessary to worry 'bout it, Bonny, if ye did your duty. Always do yer duty well, an' then never worry. How long will it take me to teach ye that, Bonny?"

"I don't want none o' your teachin'. I done my duty in druggin' him; now ye get him out of the tavern afore I'm caught."

"Bonny, ye're a man of too much impatience for this business, an' I wouldn't have suspected it from your appearance. But appearances are deceivin'—very deceivin'."

There was an exclamation of disgust from Bonny at this, and I could imagine the expression in his dull eyes. Then in a changed voice he asked:

"How much is he worth to you anyway? He was a hard one to drug, an' he'll make a good sailor when he's broken in."

"Ah! when he's broken in! There's the rub. He won't break in easily. He's stubborn an' mulish, I see that, an' he will rebel until he's half killed."

"Well, I guess ye can pretty nigh do that without any help."

There was a hoarse laugh at this pleasant suggestion.

“I can if I get him out of the harbor. I never have found any difficulty in that line. But it will take time an’ trouble, an’ that will make him worth less to me.”

“But he’ll be all the more valuable when he comes to his senses ; so that’ll make him worth double what ye paid for the last chap.”

“Now you’re strivin’ after vain things, Bonny. He’s worth just half a guinea, an’ nothin’ more.”

“Ye won’t get off for less than half o’ that for the supper he ate. An’ drink !—why, he was like a fish in water ! I couldn’t fill his mug fast enough. No, sir, it won’t cost you a shilling less than that for his supper, an’ that will be putting it down cheap.”

My landlord was getting excited, stamping with a heavy foot on the floor. My abductor’s voice also had a metallic ring about it, adding :

“I’m too old a man to be cheated, Bonny, an’ ye know me too well to try it. Knock off one-half, an’ we’ll call it a deal.”

“Make the whole thing a guinea an’ a half, an’ we’ll settle it with a drink off me.”

They moved away, and I could not follow their conversation ; but I had heard enough to know that I had been drugged for the purpose of smuggling me off to sea. There were plenty of half pirates and half merchant vessels fitted out with part of their crews in this way. They would enter a port with a short crew, and, through the co-operation of some

friend, smuggle a few decent lads aboard, and then sail away on a long cruise. The life the lads led on these boats was often worse than a living death; at the thought of this fate, the cold perspiration broke out on my forehead.

But fortunately the effect of the drug had passed away, and finding myself in full possession of my senses and powers again I rose hastily from the bed. It was an inside room, with not a window in it. My only escape was through the door, which led I knew not whither. Picking up my bundle, and taking a wooden slat out of the bed as a weapon for self-protection, I raised the latch and opened the door cautiously.

Neither ray of light or sound reached me, and I fumbled about for some time before touching the wall with my hands. Then, following this, I walked along for twenty feet till I came plump against another wall that shut off further progress in that direction. I moved my hands over the place to discover a door, window or some other means of egress. But there was none.

Then I retraced my footsteps, passed the door of my narrow room, and continued on toward the other end of the hall. Indistinct voices soon reached my ears, and in a short time my way was lighted by the rays from some candles ahead. In a few minutes I found myself at the entrance to the bar where my landlord and Jim were drinking and talking. There was no other way of exit to the open air except through this room. I stood a moment irresolute,

speculating as to the best course to pursue. I may have stood there an hour longer had not Jim looked up at the clock, and muttered ;

“ They ought to be here now ; it’s time.”

I knew that if I waited until reinforcements came from the ship there would be little chance to escape. So boldly pushing the door open, I walked quietly into the room. My landlord sprang up with a curse, but Jim was not so easily perturbed.

“ Well, my lad, did ye have a good sleep ? ” he asked. “ I told Bonny ye were very tired, an’ needed sleep. I know ye feel better. Come an’ take a drink with us.”

The bold insolence of the man attracted me, and I lowered my weapon a little.

“ Now ye are just in time to join us in a quiet drink, an’ Bonny was just speaking of how you seemed to like his ale,” he continued.

“ Yes, his drugged ale, you scoundrels,” I replied.

“ I don’t understand ye, my lad. What do ye refer to ? Explain yourself. Bonny’s ale is counted the best in Boston, an’ he’s very sensitive about anybody speakin’ against it. But if ye have anything to complain about it, say it now, for I shall have a little to say on the matter. Isn’t that so, Bonny ? ”

The man had walked almost cat-like toward me as he spoke, and as he addressed his last question to the landlord he tried to get between me and the door. I saw his ruse too soon, and raising my weapon menacingly, stepped toward him.

“ If you attempt to stop me I’ll break this stick

over your head," I said bluntly, "and I judge it's pretty solid wood."

"Ye astonish me at such language—ye whom I befriended an' brought to this tavern an' paid for your supper. Ingratitude!—ingratitude! Surely ye must be beside yourself."

"Yes, 'tis the drugged ale that has affected my brain," I replied with a hoarse laugh. "So never mind me, but let me depart in peace. I won't go to sea with you on this trip, either willingly or unwillingly."

As I made this boast my heart gave a great bound, for my ears caught the sound of footsteps approaching the tavern, and I knew instinctively that the sailors from the ship had come. My enemy had also caught the sound, and a smile suddenly wreathed his ugly face. He raised a whistle to his lips, but before he could emit a sound I had bounded through the door. I fell plump into the arms of a sailor, who shouted:

"Heigho! What's this? A bull in a chiny-shop! Shiver my timbers! But I ain't a stone wall to butt against."

I shoved the man aside and darted out of his arms only to stumble against another form. By this time the shrill whistle of Jim pierced the night air.

"There's the captain's whistle. Trouble must be a-brewin'," said the foremost.

They both started for the door, and in that lucky moment I pulled myself together and rushed out into the street.

"Catch him! catch him!" I heard Jim shriek.

But I was well out of their reach by that time, and not a pair of legs could overtake me in a straight run. I did not know which way to go, but seeing the narrow street ahead, I plunged along in the darkness at a rate of speed that soon left my pursuers far behind. I did not stop till I had covered a full mile, and then somewhat out of wind, I slackened pace to see if I was followed. As I heard no footsteps for some time, I concluded that I was safe. I was in a dark and secluded part of the city, and fearing lest in the darkness I should run foul of more danger, I decided to crawl into some old building and spend the night. I was still on the water front, for I could hear the lapping of waves on my right, but it was so dark that I could not see where the water began and the docks ended. Feeling my way cautiously with hands and feet, I managed to reach the end of a dock, and the outlines of an old building looming up ahead, I determined to make an investigation of it. If it was occupied, the owners of it were fast asleep. The door stood open; inside I found heaps of old gunny sacking, which I utilized both for covering and a bed. In less than ten minutes after I entered the building I was sound asleep.

VII.

DESPERATE STRAITS LEAD TO ADVENTURE.

AFTER that night's adventure I was more cautious in taking the advice of strangers, and yet I was placed in a position where I was forced to appeal to those utterly unknown to me. I made several ineffectual visits to the Graystone shipyard. Captain Swanson's name, I soon found, carried little weight among the shipbuilders, but this I attributed to the absence of the owner of the yard to whom my friend of the *Hartford* had recommended me personally.

In the fortnight which followed my adventure with the smugglers at Mr. Barclay's tavern my lot was a desperate one. My funds were gradually exhausted, and the last coin was finally reluctantly parted with for a meal that only helped to intensify the acuteness of hunger. Then, without money or friends in the city, I crawled under an old shed near the end of one of the docks to consider the future. I had neglected to write to Mr. Brewer to explain my predicament, and now it would be impossible to dispatch a letter to him and receive a reply before I had either starved to death or received assistance or work. I had made enough to pay for one or two

meals in doing odd jobs about the warehouses, but this had only postponed the crisis which was now upon me. It was a blank and uncertain future that awaited me. I stared hard at the darkness around, wondering if it would be better to end all by jumping into the river or to appeal to my Uncle Cunningham.

I had not lost sight of the fact that my uncle and his family lived in wealth and luxury near where I was starving, and now my mind turned to them. As a man of influence, my uncle could secure me a good position and save me from the blank despair that seemed to settle over my mind. In my ordinary condition such a thought would have been revolting to me, so strong a dislike had I taken to the man, but hunger and privation make weaklings of all. I reasoned to myself that he had never done anything to harm me, and that my prejudice against him was due to unfavorable reports of others and to childish notions that I had formed from occasional remarks of my parents. What kind of a man he was, both in personal appearance and in action, I had readily imagined, but upon reflection I found that my whole dislike rested upon flimsy ground. What reason Captain Swanson had for hating him I knew not; probably some personal experience had caused his intense animosity, which might not be entirely the fault of my uncle. Besides, who was Captain Ben Swanson? I knew little or nothing of him other than that which he had chose to acquaint me with on my first trip down the Connecticut on his flat-bottomed boat.

As I began to find excuses for my uncle I became convinced that it was my right and privilege to call upon him and seek the assistance he could readily give me. The ungentlemanly treatment I had bestowed upon his son did not tend to quiet my feelings, and my face tinged with color at the thought of the insults he might return my attempt to seek charity at his father's house. I realized that I had been to blame in parting from my cousin so rudely, and that he would be justified in turning me from his door. But the desperate straits to which I was brought made me decide to make myself known to my uncle on the morrow, despite any fear of meeting with a cold rebuff from the young dandy, who was my nearest blood relation in that part of the world. With mind more at ease, after deciding upon the course to pursue, I fell back on my rude wooden floor and soon slumbered.

But the decisions made at night do not always look so rosy in the first flush of morn. I woke with a sense of uneasiness, which increased as my mind leaped quickly over the train of thought I had followed the night before. I frowned and shook my head negatively, finally jumping up with a new decision on my lips.

"No, I will not appeal to them for help; I'll fight it out, and starve if necessary. I might write a letter to Edith, which she can read when I am dead."

Then I blushed with positive shame, remembering that I did not have anything with which to indite such a love epistle; nor the money sufficient to send

it by post. The extent of my poverty then indeed ground itself into the very marrow of my bones.

My youthful sense of fairness rebelled at the dispensation of a Providence which would strip one of every power and ability to live and enjoy life. 'Twas unjust that one should be born to such hard lot, or to be cast upon it through causes which he could not control. This bitterness had reason to swell to greater proportions as the day advanced. Hungry and faint, I tramped the streets and docks; vainly seeking some employment, and then, finally, weary, jaded and desperate, I turned my feet toward the better part of the town. I was determined at least to beg a morsel to eat,—sufficient to keep body and soul together. But a sense of honor again asserted itself, and, while standing before one of the large brick structures, where I knew plenty abounded, I smiled grimly to myself, and said:

“No, no, a Winfield cannot beg; neither can he steal; but he can die.”

I wheeled abruptly around, making for the docks again. I do not know what dark thoughts were hovering in my mind, but I felt that I would never again appear in that neighborhood. As I turned away a sudden clatter and scream startled me; before I had time to speak I stood face to face with a black horse and rider. The latter I realized in a moment was a young woman; and that she was in danger. I did not stop to learn more. 'Twas not any sense of gallantry or bravery that impelled me

to hurl myself directly in front of the snorting runaway and grasp the bridle. 'Twas merely the desperation of a hungry, discouraged, and careless man. 'Twas as easy to die trying to stop a runaway as to end existence in another way. I do not wish to claim merit for heroism in that act,—although others put a different interpretation upon it,—and for that reason I make special mention of it here.

I grasped the bridle of the powerful charger ; then felt myself shot through the air at a pace that took my breath away. The animal lifted me clear from my feet ; and, swinging his head from side to side, continued to gallop down the street. I clung with the tenacity of a bull-dog to the bridle, and never once relaxed my grasp. Either in blind fury, or for a well-reasoned motive, the animal tossed me against a stone wall once, and made bones crack till I was forced to shut my teeth to hold back the moan of pain. In all this time I could catch occasional glimpses of the white face above me. It seemed for a moment as if 'twas close to mine, and then it faded off into the distance. Then I aroused myself, knowing that faintness was overcoming me ; and renewed the struggles with the brute that was dragging me to death. Had I not been so faint and exhausted from lack of food, I might have leaped upon the animal's neck and thrown it ; but I felt unequal to this task, and helplessly suffered myself to be dragged through the streets of Boston.

To one in my position the moments of suspense

seemed like hours. Once I caught the animal's mane, and swinging myself up from his front legs, which were mercilessly pounding against my body at every stride, I threw my whole weight upon his neck. With all the strength at command I hung in this position, vainly striving to bend that proud head. I could hear the bones crack, so great was the strain upon the neck, but not one inch would it yield to my weight. Then with the muscles aching from the tension, and the blood and perspiration flowing freely from forehead, I gradually relaxed my hold and slowly dropped back. I realized that it was to my doom; for with my strength exhausted the animal would trample me underfoot. In that brief moment I had the grim satisfaction of knowing I would die in a good cause, fighting to the last for my life and that of another.

But the black charger was nearer the end of his resistance than I anticipated; even as I closed my eyes in the last effort to save myself, the horse staggered and stumbled. My weight and fierce efforts to bend the animal's neck were telling on his powers. Like a mighty oak he showed no signs of weakness till the fall. Then he came down with a crash—a total collapse. I had no time to leap to one side; but in the fall felt the crushing weight of the animal pinioning legs and body to the hard ground. The horse groaned, and then expired,—killed by a broken neck. The blood flowed from his nostrils in crimson streams.

The fair rider was unhurt by the fall, and the last

sight I obtained of her was when her pale, handsome face bent over mine.

But I was not unconscious long. The excruciating pain in my legs revived me, and brought me out of the dead faint which had for a moment overwhelmed every faculty.

In that brief period of unconsciousness, however, they had carried me from the street into the nearest house. 'Twas a fine large mansion, with liveried servants standing ready to obey the slightest behest of its mistress. Between the spasms of agony which racked my frame, I watched the fair figure of the one who had ridden so near to death. She had imperious manners, and a queenly little head, which, I thought, was a trifle too proud and haughty in its pose; but the face was so full of life and expression that it fascinated. The eyes were dark and liquid; the skin fair and soft.

When they had laid me on a bed, so soft and richly decorated that I drew back lest my rough clothes should soil it, she spoke commandingly:

“Leave him here until Dr. Bradley comes. Send Nurse Barrows to me immediately.”

Then, with her own hands, she wiped the blood and dirt from my lips and forehead, using a richly embroidered handkerchief of soft linen. The subtle odor of delicate perfume pervaded the room, and for a moment I closed my eyes in peace. 'Twas all so different from the cold, hard boards of the wharf where I had been sleeping for weeks.

“You're badly hurt,” she murmured. Then inter-

rogatively: "Do you feel comfortable now? If not, let me raise the pillow more. There! is that better?"

I nodded my head, and tried to mumble by thanks, but the words did not seem to escape my tightly-drawn lips. Then the door opened, and Dr. Bradley and Nurse Barrows appeared.

VIII.

'TIS FAIR COUSIN PRISCILLA I MEET.

I SPENT a week on my back, raving in feverish delirium, but that interval in life remains a blank to this day. When I recovered sufficiently to take note of my surroundings Nurse Barrows sat by my bedside ready to attend to my needs. Nourishing and tempting food was urged upon me, and liveried servants entered the room occasionally to ask for further orders. Soft curtains graduated the sunlight in the room, making it pleasant and cheerful to the eyes. The downy bed seemed to melt away into a fleecy bank of snow, and the grateful warmth of the room was fragrant with the delicate odor of flowers. This fragrance was so closely associated with the handsome form and face of the one I had rescued that my eyes insensibly roamed about the room to discover her presence. Then, as she failed to appear, I closed them wearily, enjoying the mental picture that the perfumery seemed to recall.

The awakening was so different from what I had experienced at Mr. Barclay's tavern that I was forced to speculate upon my changed lot. Here was nothing but kindness and gratitude awaiting me; and the indications of wealth around were evidence enough

that I had fallen into the hands of those who could help me. There was no immediate need of thinking of the future; for I knew that at least a fortnight would be required to restore me to health and strength. I learned from my nurse that I had an arm and leg broken, with two ribs badly injured; but no serious internal injury had been sustained.

"'Tis fortunate that 'twas no worse," Nurse Barrows said gently, with motherly interest in her eyes. "Another foot and Pilgrim might have all but crushed out your life."

Pilgrim, I took it, was the black charger whose wild career had nearly plunged two lives into eternity. For a moment a vision of the desperate, maddened horse with his fair rider flashed before my mind. Then, recalling the present, I asked weakly:

"Who was the rider? Whose house is this?"

Before these questions could be answered the door opened and the young mistress of the house stood before me. She was clad in a simple but rich morning dress. None such was made in America, and I doubt not it had been imported from France or London. 'Twas not the dress, nor the soft lace, which clung to the white neck and wrists, but the face and eyes of the wearer which held my attention. I had only seen the face before under the excitement of the accident, when 'twas pale and drawn; but now 'twas glorious with all the color and tint of healthy young womanhood. The face was one to marvel at, and to rave over; patrician and haughty, yet mobile enough to change with each mood of the owner.

"Welcome back to health and strength, Cousin Allin," she said, advancing to my bedside, and extending a hand.

I was too astonished to make reply in voice or action. Her lips parted, showing teeth of the purest white, as she laughed merrily.

"You must not be surprised at this greeting," she added. "We know you, and your whole history. You have been so foolish as to tell us everything in your delerium. There was no need to ask you questions, or to pry into your private affairs. You volunteered everything, and we had difficulty in not listening to what was not intended for us."

The blood mounted to my face, and my eyes opened with wonder.

"Prythee, do not be so frightened! You said nothing that will make you stand in ill-favor with us. You confessed everything to me, even about Edith, and I like you the better for it. She must be a dear little thing. Some day I shall meet her. She has golden hair, blue eyes, and a loving disposition—just the opposite to me in every way."

Again she laughed merrily, and, seating herself on the foot of the bed near my nurse, she continued:

"But isn't it strange that you, of all people, should have saved me from Pilgrim's mad pranks? You are my only cousin, and I've always wanted one to tease and quarrel with. You will have plenty of time to find out what a petty tyrant I can be while you are convalescent. I think Nurse Barrows here

can tell you what an imperious creature I am by nature."

She turned her head slightly toward my nurse, who shook her head with a smile, and replied:

"Mistress Priscilla is but joking now."

"Fie on you, nurse! I'm in earnest, and you do wrong to deceive Cousin Allin. I shall prove it by making myself more exacting with him than with others. He shall do my bidding without hope of reward."

"My reward should come in serving one so beautiful," I answered in an attempt at gallantry that seemed ill-befitting my helpless condition.

"Then you acknowledge the servitude, and promise to be satisfied with the serving? I command you then to tell me more about this pretty Edith. I've heard your ravings about her, but now I want to know your sane descriptions of her. Is she pretty? Is she demure, or bright and piquant? Does she wear imported gowns, or homespun ones? Does she live in Boston—or—or where you came from?"

I smiled at the tumultuous way in which the questions came from her mouth, giving me neither chance to answer nor to refuse. When she ceased speaking a moment I replied:

"She would not interest you. She was my old playmate, and she was pretty, but not so pretty, I think, as you."

"Thank you, Master Allin, but I did not ask for comparisons." Nevertheless, there was a pleased

blush on her cheek, and I knew that she loved flattery and open admiration of her beauty. Few women of her temperament could resist that.

"I did not wish to make comparisons," I replied. "None could be made. I should be a poor judge of looks if I attempted any. Little Edith was my first and almost only playmate at home, and we grew up together. She was like a sister to me. I had to leave her to make my fortune in the world, and I have not heard from her since."

"Have you written to her?"

I confessed with a blush that I had not, remembering with a sense of shame the extreme poverty that did not permit me even to pay for the postage of a letter.

"Then I shall write to her, and explain that you have fallen into our hands, and that if she wants you she must come for you soon. If you stay here long you will be ruined, and become as wild and reckless as my brother and his companions. They are a priggish lot, and very tiresome to me. I do not know why they are not more interesting."

There was an expression of weariness on the young face for an instant that struck me, but a moment later 'twas gone.

"You will be initiated into their pleasures soon enough," she added, "and then I shall judge whether I shall like you as well."

"Do you like me now?" I asked quickly.

"Fie! What a question! Would I be talking to you if I didn't? I'm not compelled to."

This open confession did not embarrass her, but, on the contrary, she continued:

"I should not have had them bring you into this house if I didn't like your face. There were plenty of other places to take you. But your face pleased me, and then, when you began to give away your whole family secrets, I was glad that I had you brought here. It might have been embarrassing to us if you had been somewhere else. If you talk so when under the influence of wine I advise you never to take too much. You said the most unpleasant things about your Uncle Cunningham and my brother; but me, you didn't even mention me. That was provoking! You might at least have expressed some opinion of me. I'm not such a minor member of the household as to be entirely overlooked."

"What did you hear me say about my uncle and his son? Did I offend them?"

"They did not hear you. 'Twould be a pretty tale if they had. I think they both would drive you from the house."

She laughed merrily at the thought, and walked demurely toward the window. Then continued:

"I might tell them some day. Yes, I will do it! I will hold it over your head as a menace. When you become dull and uninteresting I shall threaten you with exposure if you do not rouse yourself to amuse me. So that is what you may expect."

I smiled at her words and answered quickly:

"I shall henceforth be amusing and interesting, Cousin ——"

"Priscilla, my name is. Can't you say it?"

I had hesitated to mention the name, so sweet did it sound, but I now replied:

"Cousin Priscilla! I like the name; it has a pleasant ring to it."

She faced around suddenly and said with abruptness: "'Tis not a pretty name; that you should know; nor does it suit me. It has little meaning for me; and you'll find 'twas never intended for one of my temper and disposition. I'm not like other girls—sweet and gentle like your little Edith. What they like, I don't; and what they don't like, I do. I wish I could be a man, and have my own way to make in the world. I wouldn't be like my brother and his companions; they are low and vulgar. But I would go and seek adventure, and be a gentleman of fortune. 'Tis that I should like; 'twould be a pleasant life to lead. I would go to sea with adventurous companions, and drive the picaroons from the coast; or mayhap become one of them myself. If I could be their leader I would; 'twould suit me, I know. Then I'd go to the Barbary States, and make terms with the Sultan and live in Oriental style. I'd make life worth living. But here 'tis nothing but entertain, and do the duties of an ordinary woman; 'tis all so irksome to me. The men, too, you meet are so uninteresting; they want to be entertained first with wine, then with women. Martin and his set will soon show you what I mean. 'Tis either to make yourself entertaining to them or to stay home and knit."

This little speech was delivered with such genuine vehemence that I could not doubt the truth of the assertions. She was restless in her life, and needed the savor of adventure to quiet and develop her. I prayed that it might be my lot to show her the way.

I lay dreaming of this, wondering what the future might bring forth, when she suddenly turned from the window and added :

“ You are very uninteresting now, lying there looking at your thumbs. I supposed you could talk, at least. But you are weak and sick, and I’ll make allowance this time.”

With that she walked from the room with graceful dignity, leaving me to supply my own reasons for her behavior.

IX.

BOSTON WAYS AND TRADITIONS.

I WAS two weeks convalescent, with ample opportunity to study the home of my Uncle Cunningham and its different inmates. 'Twas a fortnight of conflicting emotions for me. First and last Priscilla so occupied my thoughts that I could not rightly form opinions of the others. My Uncle Cunningham proved a quiet, smooth man of business, courtly and dignified in bearing, and always pleasant in his talk. His large business interests kept him from the house a good deal of the time, but occasionally he would ask me about the Allin farm, and of my mother. He did not pretend to be unduly sorry for any of his neglect in the past; but he was glad that Providence had thrown me in his household. Circumstances had estranged my mother from him in life, but there was nothing to prevent her child from associating and growing up with his children. One day—a week after my accident—he went further, and said in his smooth, courteous way:

“Allin, you must arrange to make your home with us. 'Tis my wish and that of Priscilla. She has taken a decided liking to you, and Priscilla is not to be crossed without offending her. If 'tis agreeable

to you, we shall henceforth consider you as one of our household. Martin will, undoubtedly, take you around to the clubs and taverns, and introduce you to all the young men who are worth knowing, and make you feel at home. If you care to enter into business later I can find a position for you in our shipping office."

"I should prefer to go into the ship building yard," I interrupted. "I think I have a talent for building ships, and I should like to give myself an opportunity to see."

"As you say, Allin. 'Tis a good business to learn. We need ships for our growing commerce, and we cannot build them fast enough. Every year we have to import young mechanics and designers from England, and I would much prefer one of my family to any of those imported for the designing and mechanical department. When you are well enough I will take you through the yard, and personally instruct you as to general details."

This aroused some of my old-time enthusiasm, notwithstanding I was accepting a position in the very yard that I had once refused to enter with my cousin. But the difference was not one of time, but of magnetic influence from a quarter that seemed more and more to control and fascinate me. Priscilla's beauty and charms covered a multitude of sins for me, and what was related to her in any way seemed beyond cavil or criticism. I no longer saw Uncle Cunningham through the prejudiced eyes of boyhood days, but as the father of Priscilla, who seemed much

less like the man of greed and treachery than I had learned to believe. I did not think him capable of the many sins that Captain Swanson had so broadly hinted at, and, as for any treason against the colonies in the days of their struggle with the mother country, that was all too vague and far back for me to form a correct judgment. So I willingly accepted the conditions of the new life; and, as I grew stronger, drifted naturally and idly into the current of affairs.

Martin Cunningham—brother to Priscilla and my own cousin—was not the kind of companion I should select, and at times I had difficulty in accepting his haughty, arrogant manners without resentment. He took it as a matter of pleasure at first to show me the clubs and sights of the town. My surprise rather pleased than offended him, and I felt that he received reward in this way for all the trouble of introducing me to the gay, idle life which he led. In his company I soon revisited Carroll's tavern, but under circumstances very different from those which induced me to enter it on that first memorable night in Boston. I found then that my poor guinea—which had looked so big to me as I had flung it down in bravado—did not unlock the best that the place afforded. There were wines from Madeira that I had never dreamed of, and bountiful repasts that seemed to make all past experiences tame in comparison.

Hither resorted all the rich young bloods of the town. They gamed and drank away the money their fathers made in the shipping trade. Although

general poverty prevailed throughout the country because of the long struggle with England, money flowed freely into the port of Boston, and the successful merchants and shipbuilders were lavish in their display and use of it. The new commerce was springing up rapidly, and each returning ship from distant ports was laden with the manufactured goods of Europe. Whole fleets of vessels left the port every day for distant points of the compass, while the demand for new ships brought an active, restless crowd to the city. These men swarmed on the docks and in the shipbuilding yards, and gave to Boston an activity and bustle that were lacking in both New York and Philadelphia.

The whaling trade was particularly flourishing, and huge hogsheads of whale oil were piled upon the docks most of the time for lack of storage room. As fast as the whalers brought in their enormous cargoes of whale oil ships were chartered to distribute it throughout the world. Europe was an insatiable absorber of this oil, and the ready markets for it abroad tempted shippers to bid high for the cargoes of whalers before they were unloaded. 'Twas a common thing for a young captain to make one or two voyages to the whaling grounds and then be able to retire from business. Many of the crews participated in the shares of the whaling expeditions, and when their share of the profits of the voyage were paid they came ashore with plenty of funds to squander. These whaling crews were almost daily turned loose in the city for weeks of sport and recre-

ation. Numerous taverns lived entirely upon the proceeds of the expeditions, and the sailors patronized them freely till all money was gone. Then they would ship for another voyage, and repeat the process.

In this way Boston obtained more money for ready circulation than any of the inland towns or seaports along the coast. There was the threefold shipping interest that catered to her success and prosperity,—whaling, shipbuilding and the trade with Europe. The merchants found all kinds of trade correspondingly brisk. 'Twas easier to make money then than at any other period in Boston, and the town became the magnet for young men who wished to enter business as well as for those who longed to go to sea. 'Tis no exaggeration to say that half the people were well-to-do, and at least one-third of them were rich.

'Twas not the fashion to imitate England. The old Tory families, who had sympathized with the mother country, had been pretty well exterminated. They had migrated to England and their property confiscated, so that they were of little importance in the world. England had few apologists in the city that had so bitterly fought for freedom, and 'twas no longer the fashion to ape and imitate English manners and dress. But we were too young and timid a nation to depend upon ourselves for those little civilities and manners of life which make an homogeneous people. Besides, there were not the facilities to manufacture the cloth and daily articles of luxury that the wealthy needed. So 'twas absolutely neces-

sary to look somewhere for guidance and direction. 'Twas only natural that the young nation should turn toward France. In the last extremity France had recognized the struggling colonies and had sent substantial aid to them. Lafayette was a name to rouse the patriotism of every citizen, and in Boston he was revered and idolized.

I soon learned from Martin's associates that France—and not England—was the country from which the wealthy derived their notions of propriety and dress. French cloth and decorations; French wines and brocades; French table delicacies and luxuries; French manners and courtly deportment,—these appealed to the luxurious young scions of families that had so doggedly fought for their freedom. A Frenchman was as welcome in the country as an Englishman was hated. In the madness to court France's sympathy we forgot that we were of English descent, and that we were but one generation removed from our cousins across the seas. The old wound had been a deep one, and 'twas kept fresh and sore by the constant, irritating impressment of the American seamen by British ships. True, the French did the same, and in many instances boldly chased and captured our merchantmen under the old plea of lending aid to the enemy. But these abuses from French sources were seldom noised abroad, and the injustice was quickly forgotten.

The Republican clubs were hotbeds of English animosity, and they fostered an overweening love for France that made their members often ridiculous.

At these clubs, usually held in the taverns, a few young Frenchmen set the style and manners for the Americans. Fresh from France, they had all the arrogance and love for show and dress that ever characterized their race, and they seemed to take it for granted that the Americans owed them a debt of honor which they had to pay. They were admitted into the best families, there often to abuse the hospitality offered them by an assumption of lordliness and self-importance that was irritating to a man of independence.

My first initiation to one of these Republican clubs was at Carroll's shortly after admission into my uncle's home. 'Twas a noisy, boisterous scene, where more wine than sense flowed. The burden of the remarks seemed to be to abuse England and to glorify France. Little was said of the United States and the Americans. From the general flow of the conversation one might have inferred that Americans were mere colonists of France, dependent upon her will for their life.

In this throng was a young Courtney De Kalb, whose descent from some indirect line of nobility made him a sort of leader. He dressed in the extreme of fashion; boasted that his clothes were all made in Paris, and were of the latest cut; carried a jaunty sword by his side, which he claimed had overcome a dozen adversaries in duels, and used polite, though sometimes offensive language when excited. He was of medium size, but wiry and strong.

When I first met him, he impressed me unfavor-

ably. He was uncivil in his demeanor toward all who were not considered his social equals; and many a snub was accepted by the Americans from this fop that made my blood boil. I wondered if all the courage and independence of their fathers, who had fought in the late war, had deserted them in thus submitting to such insults.

Martin, I soon learned, was a particular friend of Courtney's; but this, I surmised, was for a purpose which best suited the young Frenchman's ambitions. My uncle's home was the finest in Boston, and his great wealth made it possible for him to entertain lavishly. Then his shipping interest made him one of the most powerful factors in the city's life. He had power, both political and commercial, which made him a factor to reckon with in every civic demonstration or change.

Several weeks after my first meeting with Courtney my first impressions were confirmed. 'Twas at one of the regular meetings of the Republican club at Carroll's—after the wine had been freely imbibed—that he stood on the table and drank to the health of France.

"This to the land of my birth," he said, in half drunken tones, "the best that ever was!"

This sort of boasting had no appreciable effect in rousing any opposition, and the young fop continued in more offensive tones: "We've been masters of Europe before, and we shall be again! Down with the British tyrant and his whole tribe! The English dog must be whipped back to his kennel island and

kept there. Didn't we just thrash her in this country, with the help of the colonists?"

At these words, I was unable to restrain myself, and burst out:

"'Twas the colonists, with France's help, who defeated the English. Were you at the battle of——"

My zeal was probably greater than my discretion, and Martin pulled me back into my seat, saying:

"Don't make a fool of yourself. We have enough of them here without your making another."

I was flushed with wine and excitement, and at first was inclined to resent this interference; but in another instant I saw the reasonableness of my cousin's words. No one seemed inclined to make comment upon my interruption; and, as Courtney made no further allusions to the colonists, but contented himself with abusing the English, I remained quiet for the rest of the evening.

When we left the tavern, late at night, the early occurrence of the evening returned to me, and I said to Martin:

"Why do you associate with such a young fop as that De Kalb? If I had my way, I would resent his foolish boasts and make him swallow some of his threats."

Martin laughed softly and aggravatingly, as was his habit when amused, and replied slowly:

"Oh, he's one of the leading young men of Boston, and I'd advise you not to make an enemy of him. He's hot-headed, and full of fight. If you don't want

to fight a duel with him, and have him run that dainty little sword through you, I'd let him alone. He's harmless, and only talks if you let him alone."

"I don't care for his sword and duels any more than I care for his boasts and threats," I returned hotly. "I could break that little plaything he dangles at his side in my hands, and then twist his neck in the same breath."

Martin laughed again, and answered :

"I wouldn't do that. You would deprive us of much fun, and even make Priscilla feel badly. Courtney is one of her favorites, and he is dead in love with her. I don't know what Priscilla thinks of him ; but I know what he thinks of her. So, if I were you, I would let Courtney alone, and not test his little weapon."

I did not reply to this, but walked along strangely quiet and thoughtful till we reached the house and parted for the night.

X.

CROSS CURRENTS OF LOVE AND DUTY.

I HAD drifted so naturally and easily into the new life—so unexpectedly opened for me—that I had given little concern to matters outside of my own immediate pleasure. But, as I dressed myself on the morrow, a sense of self-reproach disturbed my peace of mind. I felt that such a life of idleness was an imposition upon my uncle's hospitality. 'Twas true that I had saved Priscilla from almost certain death; but that was little excuse for accepting the luxuries and charity that had been so freely bestowed upon me.

With these thoughts disturbing the mind, I slowly made my toilet; and then descended the winding stairs below, intent upon making some change in my life. I was early, and knew that most of the family would not be down for breakfast. My uncle was a hard worker and an early riser, and I anticipated meeting him alone. Fortunately, as I entered the room I found him at the table just finishing his coffee. No one but the powdered and uniformed butler was present; and he withdrew immediately upon my entrance to give orders for my breakfast. My uncle looked up as I entered, thus greeting me:

"Good morning, Allin, I hope you had a night of good sleep."

I returned his salutation, and then advanced to the table, saying rather abruptly :

"I was anxious to see you alone for a few moments this morning, uncle. There has been something on my mind for several days, and I must speak to you about it."

At the seriousness of my tone, he put down his cup and stared at me.

"I feel that I owe you an apology for spending so long a time here without even disclosing any of my plans for the future," I continued. "'Twas mere forgetfulness, but I am now awake to a realization of my position. First, I have to thank you for your kindness, and that of all your family, in nursing me back to health."

"Didn't you get your bones broken in saving your cousin's life?" he interrupted.

"That was a mere incident," I replied, "and not an excuse for my living here in idleness at your expense."

"Tut! Tut! My lad, you talk strangely this morning. Did you have too much wine last night?"

There was a twinkle in the heavy eyes at this remark; but I did not appear to notice it. With sudden directness of speech I continued :

"Some time ago you spoke about offering me a position in the shipyard. I am ready now to begin work."

For a moment he scrutinized me with keen eyes,

and seemed lost in thought. Then, very slowly, as if weighing his words, he replied:

“Not many of the young men of Martin’s set seek work when they can live without it. I suppose you have some good reason for it?”

In spite of an attempt to hold it back, a flush mounted to my forehead, and I bit a lip to repress it.

“Yes, Uncle Cuningham,” I replied boldly, “I have reasons for it. I am built for work and enjoy it, and, besides, I’m poor and ambitious. I want to make a name for myself.”

“That sounds well, coming from one of your age, Allin,” he said; “and you shall have the opportunity to try your fortune. Come down to my office this day, and I will show you around.”

“Thank you, uncle,” I replied simply.

Then, the butler returning to the breakfast-room, conversation turned to ordinary topics of the day; to the latest news from Europe brought by packet; to the outlook of trade; to the political questions that were agitating the newly-formed government; and to the social affairs of the season. I ate freely and heartily of the breakfast, and, when my uncle had finished, I had dined till a healthy young appetite was well appeased.

I had grown into a stalwart youth of ample proportions in those days of luxurious idleness; and, as I surveyed myself in the long glass near the window, I frowned with disapproval. ’Twas too large and powerful a frame to make a good appearance; and I almost regretted the possession of the muscles, which

stood out on every limb like knotted rope. There was a suggestion of clumsiness in the long reach of the arms and in the thick, square-set shoulders. I fell unconsciously to comparing my large, muscular hands with those of Courtney De Kalb's. The face and figure of the young Frenchman continually appeared before me; and more than once I caught myself thinking intently of his appearance.

"I could crush his two hands in one of mine," I thought, closing my fingers in a tight grip.

Yet, I remembered withal, that the slim hands of the young fop were trained to the use of the sword; and there was lurking in the purple veins a suggestion of sinewy strength that might prove of unexpected power in a duel with swords.

At the thought of this I turned from the glass, and frowned. Doing so, my eyes met those of Priscilla, who was standing in the doorway, mockingly surveying me.

"I did not know that you inspected yourself in the glass so much, Cousin Allin," she said. "Martin and his companions have already made you proud of your looks and dress. I will see that a larger pier glass is put in your room; that one must be too small and uncomfortable for one of your size."

The courtesy which followed these words stung deeper than the mocking laughter, which lurked in the corners of the mouth.

"You are very considerate, Cousin Priscilla," I said, striving to curb a sharp rejoinder to her words; "but I need only to inspect my face, and the glass

is plenty large enough for that. Even you must admit that my face is no larger than—your brother's, for instance, or Courtney De Kalb's."

She replied, with a look of innocence on her face that deceived:

"No, your face is not too large; 'tis rather too small for one of your size. It makes you look odd."

Without replying directly to this sally, I added:

"Before you entered I was thinking of my hands more than of my face. See! my hands are unusually large and muscular, and I could crush an ordinary hand in them as easily as I broke Pilgrim's neck."

A look of admiration entered her eyes, followed by the slightest of shudders; but she replied in her bantering style:

"I shall be careful hereafter in shaking hands with you, if such thoughts run through your mind."

"Never fear," I rejoined slowly; "I shall never use them to hurt a woman."

Her mood suddenly changing, she said in her most gracious way:

"I know you are very gallant, Cousin Allin, and to prove my trust in you let me lead you to a seat, where you must stay while I eat my breakfast."

Taking me by the hand, she conducted me to a seat opposite, and then continued in her sweetest voice:

"Now tell me what you did last night at Carroll's. 'Tis such a bother to get news from Martin. He's either too stupid or too lazy to talk. But you will tell me all?"

"There's little to tell, Cousin Priscilla," I replied weakly. "Indeed, we did nothing but talk and drink."

"That must have been very entertaining! What delight men must find in drinking and talking half the night! I could never discover the secret of the charm. Can't you enlighten me?"

I laughed at the concealed mockery of the words, and finally answered truthfully:

"No, Cousin Priscilla; I cannot, for very good and sufficient reasons."

"What are your reasons?" she asked, puzzled. "They must be very strange if you cannot discuss them with me."

"I can discuss them with you," I continued, enjoying her perplexity; "but you will not be any better informed than before."

She looked steadily across the table; then with an inquiring expression on her face waited mutely for me to proceed.

"The reason why I can't help you to discover the charm of such entertainments," I began slowly, "is that I have never found it myself. Drinking and talking, night after night, in a smoky tavern, does not attract me, and I fear it is such a bore to me at times that I make it felt. I suppose it is very ill-mannered of me to show it, but I can't help it. I was brought up in the country in a very plain, homely way, and I can't shake off the old activity that was bred in my bones."

"Then this life we live is too quiet for you?"

There was a flash in the eyes, as she asked this, but I replied bluntly :

“Yes, too quiet and idle for one of my disposition, Cousin Priscilla, and so I have decided upon a change.”

She looked up quickly, venturing no inquiry, except to arch the eyebrows and curve the lips.

“I was speaking to Uncle Cunningham before you came down about the change,” I continued slowly, “and we have settled it between us. I am going down to the shipyard this morning, and I shall begin work there to-day; or, if we think it wise, I shall take a trip in one of his ships to learn navigation. I don’t know which yet.”

A silence fell between us. After a long pause, I asked :

“Which would you advise me to do?”

“I do not advise at all,” Priscilla answered quietly. “You can do what you think best. But——”

She hesitated a long time, and I said :

“Do not keep me waiting.”

“If you wish to know what I would do, I’ll tell you.”

“I should like to know,” I replied simply.

“Then I would go to sea,” she answered bluntly.

Again a silence fell between us. Rising from the table, I replied, as quickly as possible under the circumstances :

“I shall remember your choice, and let it help me to a decision.”

Priscilla did not answer; but stood, a puzzled expression of doubt on her face. I walked past her, and out into the crisp morning air.

XI.

MY FIRST DESIGNING.

MY uncle Cunningham was a thorough business man ; whatever other faults could be brought against his character none could gainsay that he was a hard and conscientious worker. His shipping office was a scene of tireless activity from early morn till dawn of night ; and rows of clerks toiled incessantly at the accounts of his vast business. There was a spirit of energy and activity infused into every employee in the office and shipyard ; and either through fear or favor each performed his duty with zest and enthusiasm. 'Twas not only a personal mastery of details that had enabled my uncle to succeed, but a peculiar quality he possessed of stimulating those under him to their greatest efforts.

Both in the mechanical and construction departments, as well as in the office, there was orderly business routine. The master mind of this great plant was ahead of his competitors in specializing and systematizing his work ; and I soon learned that the establishment was considered a model of its kind in every particular. He had already made machines of his men,—good working and intelligent machines, but machines nevertheless. Each performed his allotted task, and knew little of his companion's work. In this way the

secrets of the yard and office were kept inviolate. Many of the finest-designed ships of the day had been built at my uncle's yards ; and the fame of his clippers was second to none.

There was nothing in office and rows of books and clerks that attracted me when I first visited the place under his guidance ; but when we emerged from the low office building, and stepped into the shipyard, my whole attitude changed. I once more felt the love for the sea and ships surging through the blood. A fine clipper was on the stocks nearly ready for launching ; and, as I saw her tall tapering masts rising far up into the blue sky, I exclaimed :

"What a fine ship, uncle ! Who designed her ?—and who made her figurehead ? 'Tis a good model ; but 't is not accurate. It may cut the water all right, but it spoils the effect of the prow."

There was an awkward pause after this criticism ; and my uncle's voice had an offended ring in it when he finally replied :

"You must be mistaken, Allin, for we have one of the finest designers in Boston. Let me call Mr. Bowles."

We walked down to the edge of the water ; a gray-headed workman stood there, and greeted us.

"Is there anything wrong in that figurehead, Mr. Bowles ?" abruptly asked my uncle.

"Aye, aye, sir, your eyes are sharp," the old designer answered. "I noticed it, but none of the other workmen saw it. My eyes must be gettin' poor from age."

"I did not notice it; but my nephew here called my attention to it," was the reply.

"Then, sir, his eyes must be good, and he must know something about art and figureheads. Has he had training for designing?"

This was directed to me; I replied with a negative shake of the head.

"Then, sir, you should have it. You should study to take my position. We will soon be needing a good man in the yard."

"Are you thinking of resigning?" interposed my uncle.

"Not until my eyes give out, sir; and that I fear is near at hand: they trouble me much now."

We walked around the fine ship; I admiring her graceful curves and lines; they talking of the ordinary business matters of the yard. When we finally left, my uncle said:

"I see that your tastes run to ship work, and not to office routine, Allin. Would you like to study designing under Bowles? He is one of the best modelers of fine ships in the service. His figureheads, too, have been the best that ever left Boston harbor. He could give you secrets that would make your services invaluable to us. What say you, Allin?—would it be to your liking?"

"Nothing would please me more," I answered, impulsively. "I am anxious to make a beginning. If I cannot go to sea, I should like to build ships for others to go in."

“You shall have an opportunity, then, to fit yourself for Bowles’ place.”

Thus was work prepared for me in the shipyard; and I found a position fitted for me that both suited Bowles and my uncle. The old ship designer, I soon discovered, was an expert craftsman; possessing some of the artistic qualities of a genius, and a lover of his trade, which made him enthusiastic over every detail. In the model room—after he had put me through an examination of subjects which I modestly disclaimed all knowledge of—he said:

“I like you better than if you came here knowin’ it all. I’ll show you some lines that no man in Boston can imitate. They can’t see the way ’tis done. ’Tis all skill and science, an’ it makes all the difference in the world in sailin’ the ship. Give me a hammer an’ chisel an’ a block of wood, an’ I’ll make a model that will sail. ’Tis a secret that can’t be picked up outside of this yard. There was a ketch I designed for Mr. Cunningham that was as simple as the wood out of which it was made, an’ no one could understand why it should sail fast; but, sir, it had no equal along the coast. It can’t be overhauled to-day by any ketch from Maine to New York. Then there’s a dozen clipper ships designed by me that can show a clean pair of heels to anything on the ocean. Not one of ’em has been captured by the pirates. Why? Because they can’t sail as fast.”

While the designer continued his narrative about boats that he had fashioned, and sent forth on their world-wide missions, I seated myself at the rough

table on which were several half-finished designs sketched on wooden blocks. Some were for parts of the ships that I did not understand; but one was evidently intended for a future figurehead. 'Twas that of a fair maiden pouring from her horn of plenty a libation to father Neptune. The figure, the flowing tresses, and the draped robe were finished; but the face had not yet been sketched in. Mechanically, and almost unconsciously, I took up the pencil and drew the outlines of a face that suited my fancy.

At first the old designer did not notice me; then I became so absorbed in my work that I forgot his presence. Not until I had finished the face, and threw down the pencil, did I notice that Bowles was leaning over me, studying eagerly the first sketch of my hand.

"Where did you get that idea?" he asked abruptly. "Whose face is it?"

"'Tis only a fancy—a dream face," I replied, laughingly.

The old man shook his head negatively.

"Young men don't dream such faces unless they have seen them somewhere. I never had such a dream, and I never drew such a face."

At these emphatic words I glanced down again at the work of art. I remembered vaguely that Priscilla's face had been in mind, and I had half intentionally tried to transfer the image to paper; but my effort had failed. 'Twas not Priscilla's face. It looked like, yet quite unlike, it. It had the same handsome, patrician outlines; but the pensive, half-

sad expression of the eyes and mouth did not belong to my cousin. For a moment it recalled some dim memory of the past. Then suddenly I saw Edith standing before me. They were her eyes and mouth, her rich tresses and neck. But 't was fairer yet than Edith, and gentler than that of Priscilla.

Again I replied sharply and impatiently:

"'Tis only a fancy picture!—nothing more."

"So you said before," Bowles replied, leaning over the table. "Do you think you could carve it in wood?"

"I'm not so handy with chisel and knife as I am with pencil; but under your instructions I might learn. Then I would try if——"

"Well, sir, what is the if for?"

"I was going to say if I could get the model to pose for me," I added thoughtfully.

"Ah, I thought 'twas no fancy picture," retorted the old designer, with a twinkle in his half-blind eyes. "Well, you get the model to pose for you, and I'll instruct you and fit up the loft overhead where you won't be disturbed. I'll give you the first lessons in handling the tools now."

Picking up a block of soft wood, the man attacked it with chisel and knife; cutting and whittling it down till there grew out of it the outlines of a featureless head. Then with dexterous wrist movements, he rounded out cheek and chin, eyes, nose, and mouth. As if by magic, he breathed into existence the hair and ears; and from the heart of the hard block of wood swelled a voluptuous bust and fair, sloping

neck. 'Twas all so marvelous and perfect that I stood entranced till the old man spoke.

"There, sir, 'tis finished, and a fair one it is too."

"I shall never be able to do that," I replied honestly, breathing hard and slowly.

"You'll do better some day. You have genius. I never had it. I always fell short of it; you will reach it."

"But those tools!—I could never learn to handle them like that. 'Tis marvelous."

"Ah, sir, you think as I did once. No, no, 'tis not hard, but easy, when you learn how. 'Tis wrist movement, and practise—practise. Let me show you."

He placed the chisel and mallet in my hands.

"'Tis all a trick of the wrist," he continued, showing me. "See! Here's the center of your block; now work to the left; then to the right; chip here, chip there. Careful!—a little at a time. The small chips make the best figure. Big ones spoil it. With your model before you or in your mind, you cut away the wood first to make the outline of the head, an' then fill in slowly. It takes time an' patience. I used to study a month on a face before I dared touch it. Hurry spoils the artist. When you are three-score-and-two you can afford to carve rapidly. But you are young now—a beginner—a learner—an' speed is not what you want."

XII.

TO DISPLEASE COURTNEY PRISCILLA POSES.

I WAS not so apt a pupil at carving and designing as my master anticipated. My first lesson was followed by many others, and the old craftsman took as much interest in my development as if I had been his son ; but many times I provoked him. My chisel would not show the cunning that my pencil sketching had predicted. Nevertheless, I worked hard at it ; and, though often tired and weary with a hard day's work, I was satisfied and cheerful.

I did not speak to Priscilla about my new life. She made no reference to it ; so I was mute in regard to it. She undoubtedly knew something of it ; for I was always busy and away from the house. I generally appeared at the breakfast table early, and went down to the shipyard before the other members of the family had risen. I felt that if I was to learn the trade, and prove a worthy successor to old Bowles I must be up early and doing. There was neither time nor strength to waste.

I took my noonday meal at the coffee-house on the docks ; eating with the common workmen, and listening to their good-natured conversation. With coarse leathern breeches and rough shirt, I looked fully as much of their class as any apprentice.

The old life with Martin and his companions faded out of mind ; I no longer found the time to accompany them to their drinking bouts at Carroll's Tavern. Martin was rapidly becoming a stranger to me ; and even Priscilla, though living in the same house, was little in my company. At night-time I would often sketch and finish designs in my room ; and on the morrow attempt to carve them in wood. Bowles was ever a kind director and enthusiastic companion. His instructions never ceased to stimulate and make plain my weak and strong points.

Thus the weeks and months passed ; and I progressed from an apprentice to a craftsman capable of following in the footsteps of the master designer. Then one day, after hours of difficult toil, Bowles said abruptly :

"Take your model and make a figurehead for the clipper that's on the stocks. No man can make a better one. I've taught you all I know."

I felt the blood mount to my forehead, and stammered slowly :

"But a model is hard to secure."

"Aye, sometimes it is, but I'll leave that to you. Get the model you had in mind when you made that first drawing. She'll do to grace the prow of any ship."

I thought of this at night in the seclusion of my room ; and, amid the clouds of smoke which I was puffing, the vision of the fancy picture stood before me. If I could grasp it and model it in wood, no finer figure-head would ever sail from Boston. For a

moment I seemed to catch the details, and tried to fix them in my mind. Then suddenly they seemed to fade away into some indistinct, shadowy substance.

Impatient at the failure, I turned around and saw standing in the doorway one whose loveliness held me captive for a moment. 'Twas Priscilla, in some soft, clinging dress that made her superb beauty wondrous to look at.

"I did not come to intrude, Cousin Allin," she said, without moving a step nearer, "but to ask if you are well. You looked pale and tired at the table to-night, and I thought something was troubling you. Or have you been working too hard at the shipyard? Papa has told me all about your work there. He said that you would some day be a better designer than Bowles; and he has always been talking about and praising his figure-heads. I have always thought they were lacking in taste and proportion. But——"

"And you are right, Cousin Priscilla," I interrupted, with a smile, "even if I, a disciple of Bowles, say so. 'Twas the lack of proportion in one of his wooden ladies that first attracted my attention. And then, as to the matter of taste—well, it never seemed to me as if he had seen a fair woman in the flesh to model from."

"I suppose you think you can improve upon his figures because you have," she rejoined, with mischievous flash in her eyes.

"Yes, and because I daily have one before my eyes

to inspire me," I replied, boldly. "I could not go far astray if I followed that."

She stepped back a little, then answered coldly:

"People say I can be as cold and heartless as wood or stone, and my face might make a good figure-head."

"I should like to carve it in wood," I continued, accepting the challenge. "Then if I got desperate I could go to sea with you. I would have the satisfaction of knowing that you were under my command, and I could make you do my bidding."

"Carve me? What do you mean?" she asked, eyes flashing.

"Just what I have said, Cousin Priscilla. I want to make my first figure-head for your father's new clipper an ideal one. I want it to be the loveliest human face and figure that ever graced a Boston ship. And I have chosen you as my model."

"Without my permission? How can you do it?"

The flash of anger gave place to curiosity, and the eyes were less brilliant.

"Easily, cousin," I answered, slowly. "Your face is engraved on my mind, and when I come to draw on paper my hand traces your face and figure unconsciously. Sometimes it seems to fade off into a face that I hardly recognize, and then——"

She waited for me to finish.

"And then," I reflected, "it comes and goes. I do not know how to explain it, unless 't is because you are not with me when I am drawing, to check off mistakes. An artist wants a model before him

all the time he is sketching. I do not know why else I fail to catch the expression of your beauty."

"It might be because you are thinking of someone else, and 'tis not my face, after all, that you are drawing," she said, quietly.

"That would be impossible, as you are the only one I have seen since I have been in Boston."

"But you still remember Edith?"

"Yes, I remember her. How could I forget her? In fact, I received a letter from her to-day. She is still living on the farm, but her father is not very well. He has been failing for some time. I fear if anything should happen to him 'twould go hard with poor Edith."

"In that case you would have to look after her—perhaps marry her."

Priscilla advanced into the middle of the room, and took a seat on the edge of a box I had used for a sketching-table. I flinched at this suggestion, and replied lamely:

"I do not care to marry. I am anxious to make some reputation here in Boston first."

"What can you achieve here in Boston?" she asked, scornfully. "Nothing but a little reputation for cutting wooden idols out of Southern pine to nail on the front of ships. Bah! That is nothing. I would go away—beyond the seas—and find something great and stirring."

"I know, Cousin Priscilla, that you want to get rid of me," replied I, a little stiffly. "You told me once before to go to sea; but, you see, I didn't take

your advice. I'm bound to stay on land till—till—well, till I model you, for instance, in wood. Then I might follow you on some good ship."

"Then the sooner 'tis done the better."

The seriousness of her manner aroused me, and I looked inquiringly at her face. Had she taken me in earnest, and was she willing to let me carve her?

"Then will you consent to pose for me?" I asked, a little breathlessly.

"Yes, if you wish it. I may as well send my wooden self to sea after adventures if I can't go myself."

"But the old workroom down at the shipyard is a dreary place, and your father might not consent."

"If I wish to go, I shall ask nobody's consent," she interrupted, with toss of the proud head.

"But old Bowles," I reasoned; "he might——"

"Never mind Bowles! What time do you want me to begin posing?"

"To-morrow; the next day; any time it will suit you."

"Then to-morrow I shall go down, and you must take me up to the work-loft without speaking to anybody about it. I hate to meet the men down there; they are so dirty and unclean."

Still I was unconvinced that 'twas right, and protested further:

"Think of what Martin may say, and—and Courtney De Kalb."

I was uncertain how she would take this suggestion; her face was like a study in clouds before a

storm. Then suddenly it cleared, and she laughed lightly as she replied :

“ ’Twill annoy Courtney : that’s why I do it. I like to shock his fine French manners.”

Changing manner and expression instantly, she turned coldly toward me, and added :

“ You did not think ’t was to please you that I did it? ’Twas all for a selfish reason, all my motives are for self.”

Then with turn of the head, and a mocking glance from fine eyes, she swept from the room, leaving me with my thoughts and vision.

XIII.

'TIS OUR FIRST QUARREL.

THE old workshop in the loft had a front entrance, opening into the busy shipyard, and a spiral, rickety stairs that led to one of the back streets. I used this latter in preference to passing through the shipyard, where all the workmen were to be encountered. Priscilla, despite her prejudice against the shipyard and its dirty workmen, was familiar with every part of the great yard; and she knew of the back stairs.

'Twas well in the middle of the forenoon when I was first conscious of her presence in the loft. I was standing before a half-drawn model, studying attentively its outlines, when I heard a soft step on the floor. Turning quickly, I was not surprised to see Priscilla, wrapped from head to foot in a long gray cloak, with hood concealing most of her head and hair from view. Throwing the hood aside, she said:

“I could pass for almost anything in this hideous cloak, and my best friend would not know me.”

“You could not deceive me,” I replied promptly. “’Twould take more than a somber cloak to hide your beauty from view.”

Without replying, she walked to the bench, and examined some of the half finished designs that I had sketched and carved in wood.

"Is this the elusive model you spoke of?" she asked, picking up the identical one that had attracted Bowles.

"Yes; that is the one. What do you think of it?"

She stood a moment, gazing critically at it, and frowned. Then replied quietly:

"There is less of me in it than Edith."

I stepped toward the bench, and answered quickly:

"That is not true. There is nothing of Edith in it—hardly the suggestion of a lineament. You said that merely to embarrass me."

For a moment her luminous eyes seemed to search me through; then she added less emphatically:

"Of course I never met Edith; but you have a different ideal from me, or else——"

"I am a poor artist," I finished.

She nodded her head affirmatively; the blood mounted to my cheeks so that I had to bite my lips to repress my feelings.

Priscilla walked calmly away from the disputed model; halted before a huge block of wood, and asked comically:

"Is this to be my wooden image?"

"That was selected specially for you," I answered, forgetting anger. "Both Bowles and I spent half a day in the yard selecting it for you. 'Tis almost flawless."

She walked around it, measuring her height along-

side of it; and touching its solid grain with the tip of a finger.

"Have you any idea how you would like me to pose?" she asked indifferently.

"I have, Cousin Priscilla," I replied eagerly, "but I am almost afraid to tell you, for I know 'twill be an uncomfortable position. But it will show to the best advantage; and make your figure and beauty the envy of all who follow the sea. I want you to pose this way."

I led her to a seat, fitted up for her, where she could half recline in the attitude of hanging over the prow of a ship.

"I have tried to make it as comfortable as possible," I continued; "but at the best it is an uneasy position. You will only have to pose for a short time at once. I shall soon catch the effect, and then you can rest in your chair while I fill in the details."

Unhesitatingly she stepped in position, swinging herself outward to assume the attitude I had arranged.

"You must tell me when I suit," she said. "Is this right?"

"Yes, all except——"

"What? I can't read your mind."

"Your hair is not just right," I replied. "It must fall in long flowing tresses down your back, and over your shoulders, as if the wind had caught it."

Unloosening the coils, she dropped them in great wavy masses; as they fell about me I stood watching their lustrous beauty.

"Can't you fix the hair to suit yourself?" she asked impatiently, as I stood absorbed in thought. "I can't pose and arrange myself too."

With trembling hands, I pushed back the long hair, and twined the tresses so they would serve my purpose. Then stepping aside a little, I exclaimed:

"'Tis perfect."

Seizing pencil and marking line, I hastily drew the outlines of the model; working with such force and rapidity that I was astonished at my own powers. My art never seemed so easy and perfect; and a glow of satisfaction came over me. In absorption I forgot all else; and for a full hour I labored to catch the fleeting expression that had so often baffled me. Priscilla hardly moved a muscle, but I was conscious of her dreamy eyes following me in my work. The old clock ticked away in the loft; but I did not heed flight of time till suddenly, looking up, I saw the cramped position of my model. The lines on her face were drawn; and the blood had left her lips white and unnatural.

"Priscilla, I—forgive me," I exclaimed hastily, dropping pencil and line. "Why did you not speak? I forgot myself."

"No, you forgot me," she replied coldly. "Help me down please."

Cramped and stiffened, she could not help herself; and I led her to a seat with the utmost penitence.

"'Twas brutal of me," I continued, "and I do not deserve forgiveness."

"You are a poor apologizer, Cousin Allin," she

replied angrily. "The courtier was not born in you."

These words stung, and I replied quickly:

"No, I have never been at the French court. Young Courtney could play the part of courtier better."

The blood slowly mounted to her face.

"Why do you speak of Courtney so often?" she asked imperiously. "Have I not a right to like him, and, prithee, love him too if I choose? Who is to say me nay? Surely not you. It ill becomes one of your standing to speak thus of another who is a gentleman by birth and education, even if I do call you cousin, and you live in our house!"

Adjusting the cloak over her shoulders, she walked majestically across the loft; then down the stairs into the street. I stood immovable as the block of wood before me, with her words burning on my brain. From another they would have been an insult that only blood could wipe out; but coming from Priscilla they had another meaning. They made me realize my position of dependence more than ever; and mortification deepened as I thought of the difference in our stations in life.

Dropping the tools of my profession, I flung myself on the pile of shavings and watched the lingering rays of the sun play fancy pictures on the cobwebs of the ceiling. As I lay there I thought of the life in Boston; and of that quiet, peaceful one on the banks of the Connecticut. For a time my mind forgot the present, and I found pleasure in dreaming of

other days and scenes. Edith once more stood by my side, and we sailed our little craft up and down the river. Night came on apace; and still my mind played truant with the present and went wandering into the past. In this mood I lay till quiet slumber possessed me, and my dreams became unconscious realities.

'Twas early morning ere I finally returned to life. The sun was no longer flickering on the cobwebs of the ceiling; but was flooding the opposite side of Boston harbor. From the loft the scene was one of beauty. The crimson flood was bathing ships and water in its glow. Like an apparition of gold it stole swiftly across the expanse of water, and then vanished into an invisible halo. When it left the harbor lights and water, I sighed, and bethought myself of my position.

There was plenty to eat and drink at the wharf coffee-house; but, in truth, my early appearance caused the sleepy owner to stare rudely at me. In the crisp air of the morning the smell of the salt sea brought appetite and vigor; and eyes wandered toward the blue waves that seemed to stretch in boundless reaches straight across the earth.

XIV.

LONG JIM IN A NEW RÔLE.

ALL was silent and desolate in the shipyard without the workmen. Tall, gaunt spars mingled together in a forest of tangle. The graceful lines of the goodly clipper, which my figurehead was to adorn, stood out sharp and angular against the morning sky. The prow was sharp and curving, formed to cleave the water as a shark's fins. In the niche under the curve were the grooves waiting for the outlines of the wooden goddess whose tresses would long dip the waters of foreign seas.

I stood by the ship and watched the harbor lighten up with a new flood of light as the sun burst a cloud. A new speck appeared in the distance, looming up rapidly under the force of wind and tide. It grew big and important with its tattered sails and torn rigging, telling the story of a hard voyage and many storms. The dirty, scraped hull confirmed the tale of rough weather.

A score of dingy heads hung over the leaden sides, scanning the city of their home with beady, expectant eyes. 'Twas a welcome sight to them; but the great city was still half slumbering and greeted her return-

ing offsprings lazily — indifferently. To them 'twas an event of years : to the city a daily occurrence.

The ship approached closer, beating her way up the harbor under a strong breeze, which filled and bellied out her sails like the wings of a bird. The row of heads took form and strange outlines. Some were young and beardless ; others were grizzled with age and hair. The bronze of the sea and sun were written on all. When abreast the line of docks, a commotion in their midst changed the scene from one of quiet passiveness to activity. Several dark bodies jumped upon the gunwales ; before I could divine their motive they were leaping overboard. This singular action was unaccountable ; and I watched them with keen interest. The men were good swimmers, striking out boldly for the shore. Their flight was for the most part toward the lower and more deserted quarter of the city ; but one swimmer seemed unable to breast the tide, and headed straight toward me.

He was a beardless youth, but not so good a swimmer as his size and girth might indicate. The sun of many climes had burned and tanned his skin the hue of leather ; his eyes were those of a frightened and hunted beast. I kept mine on him and waited.

His strokes yielded to the weariness of the body, and they grew less forceful as he drew nearer. The limit of his strength seemed to come suddenly, for he gurgled, and beat the water aimlessly. I shouted : " Make the shore here ; I'll help you."

He turned his dull, glazed eyes ; and there was a

question of retreat in them. But reassurance seemed to come, or desperation overcame every fear, for he struck out toward me with greater vigor. But it was short-timed. He wavered a moment; then gurgled horribly, and disappeared.

He was heavier than I judged, as I found when I swam to his side and tried to pull him shoreward. With great strength, I drew him upward, and dropped him on the wharf, panting a little with my own exertions. Then I rolled and rubbed him back to consciousness. His eyes opened with the dull glaze of fear and uncertainty. Then they strayed from me to the incoming ship, which was now warping up to the dock nearby. Without replying to my words, he said fearfully :

“I must get away from here : they’ll take me away again.”

There was such fear in his face that I pitied him, and said kindly :

“They will not touch you ; I will see to that.”

For reply he rolled his eyes heavenward, as if uttering a prayer or malediction, and muttered under his breath :

“They will take me if they can catch me, but—I’m away ! Help me if you will an’——”

I took him by the arm, and together we walked across the yard.

“Ye don’t know what a hell that ship is,” he whispered, “an’ her captain—he’s the devil himself.”

I did not heed the shouts from the ship ; but led my man toward the loft, and bade him enter. “No

man can touch you here," I explained, "and you are safe."

He thought less of my promised security than I did; but he was still too weak to run, and he sighed his resignation. Together we walked up the stairs, and I gave him what help he needed. There were bruises and hard knocks on his face and limbs, and marks of chains and irons ringed his wrists. There were gaunt hunger and faintness written on his face; I shoved him on my bed of shavings, and hurried across to the coffee-house to bring food and drink.

Returning, I found the door leading to the loft open, wrenched almost from its hinges. Up in the loft voices were mingled with oaths and shuffling of feet. When I stood at the top of the landing half a dozen bronzed sailors blocked the way. At this unwarranted intrusion my blood ran high, and I stood a moment unable to speak for anger.

"There's the chap that helped him," one of the intruders said.

"An' he's brought him his breakfast," remarked another. "We'll save him the trouble. Jes' hand that here, an' tell us where the deserter is hidin'."

For answer I spilled the hot coffee over the wretch's face, and broke the thick china on his head. Then, before he could recover himself to resent the blow, my eyes caught sight of a face that obscured all else in the loft. 'Twas one that had never been lifted from my mind since that night in Mr. Barclay's tavern on the wharf. 'Twas a dark and loathsome face then; now it seemed pitted with a new hideousness

that made it tenfold worse. The sharp, beady eyes, the hooked nose, and the swarthy skin were all those of Long Jim who had tried to smuggle me off to sea.

A shade of annoyance swept across the swarthy complexion; but he was a man of parts, and knew the value of controlling himself. He was calmer than I, when I spoke in wrath and indignation:

"You scoundrel! What right have you in breaking into my uncle's building? I shall see that the law punishes you this time!"

The man quailed a little; but 'twas merely a momentary weakness. Then he spoke in his persuasive way:

"I see ye're bound to do me injustice, my lad. Some day it may be different. That day ye'll understand Long Jim, an' thank him. We meet again to quarrel; let us part in peace. My men here will speak for me. They know me."

He waved a long, skinny hand toward the bull-dog creatures grouped near, but I returned his answer hotly; "I want none of their words! They may be as bad as you; they look it."

The withering scorn of my looks more than the words, I judge, stirred resentment in the hearts of the sailors; but before any could reply Jim added: "He's a misinformed lad, my good men. Forgive him as I do. Some day he may know us."

Sick of the man's hypocrisy, I interrupted sharply: "I want no more! Give me your reason for breaking in here."

"The excuse any sea captain has to enter an open

door after one of his deserters," blandly, and almost offensively, returned the man.

"So 'tis another one of your kidnapped lads. Then you'll never get him. Thank God I stood for once between you and your deviltry! Would that I could make your whole crew mutiny, and hang you to the yard-arm! Forsooth, 'tis because they don't do it that makes me think they're as black at heart as you."

"Misjudged again! The poor sailor lad was crazy—crazy with fever—and we were taking him home to his mother. I even set up o' nights nursin' him back to health. An' this is the thanks I get!"

"Fever brought on by your deviltry," I shouted. "Now leave me, and I will see my uncle about having you punished. There is some law in Boston yet—even for pirates!"

"Yes, my lad, see your uncle; he knows it; knows Long Jim, one of his best captains; an' he will not misjudge him. He believes me when I speak the truth. 'Twas one of his sailors that I was tryin' to save."

In truth the man knew he had me; his words brought loathing to my mind. Was this the kind of man my uncle employed to sail his ships? The man's face mocked me; and I winced under his gaze, but said boldly:

"Leave me at once! I have no use for you! My uncle will settle the matter with you."

"That he will, my lad; an' in justice. Your uncle is calm and reasonable, but youth is hot an' tempered.

I bear ye no ill will. Long Jim never harbors revenge, but forgives his enemies as they speak. Come, my men, we will leave the deserter here for the present."

They filed across the floor and down the steps; then out into the yard; one, two, three, I counted, and then the blood surged back into my face. Three were left below to guard the building!

XV.

PRISCILLA LENDS DISGUISE.

OPPOSITION stimulates to great actions, and makes cunning the poorest of us. Long Jim was determined to capture his deserter, take him red-handed from me. I was equally decided that it should not be. 'Twas not plain how this was to be done. But that mattered not. For the present I was safe; and so was my man.

Beneath the shavings the wretch cowered and trembled: I kicked them aside and disclosed his blanched face, fantastically decorated with curling scraps of pine. "Ye won't give me up?" he pleaded in terror.

"Do I act like a traitor?" queried I. "Did I speak for you or against you? Well, then wait until I can find a way of escape; for the present stay here."

The hunted animal stared from his eyes and drawn face, but his wits were at the end of their reach; he had no plan or scheme to save himself. So he relied entirely upon me. "If it hadn't been for ye, I'd been drowned afore this," he articulated thickly; "an'

I ain't sure but 'twould have been the best fur me. I'd die afore I'd go to sea again."

"You have no love for Long Jim then?"

"You knows him?" blurted out the man.

I did not enter further into details, but nodded affirmatively. The sailor shook his head, and stared. I tried to think of a way of escape for him. I had him only so long as daylight stayed with us. With the coming of night there would be new calculations to meet. 'Twas not a problem to dismiss lightly.

Then suddenly light footsteps behind me drew my head around. There stood a newcomer. I expected to see Long Jim; instead, I met, face to face, Priscilla. The tension relaxed, I impulsively stepped forward, and said:

"Cousin Priscilla, I'm so glad to see you!"

For answer she colored, and her voice contained emotion: "Cousin Allin, I was worried about you. Why did you not come home last night?"

I saw the drift of her thought; my own mind went back to the preceding day and night. The tumult of the morning had crowded out an age of events; now they returned to me. Priscilla's new tenderness was born of those events, and my non-appearance at the house. How she had repented over night of her hasty words! But she would not want it recalled. So I said: "Many things have happened since last night, and I am in trouble."

The inflection and the hesitation caught her ear. "What is the matter, Cousin Allin?" she asked in concern. "Tell me that I may help you."

“You can help me, Priscilla,” I replied, purposely dropping the cousin, and then—“if you have a mind to.”

“I have! I wish it! I will do it to atone for my words of last night. Speak, Cousin Allin.”

“You don’t know what you promise,” I said, mysteriously. “I—you should hear before you promise. Then——”

“I never promise that way,” she added, with spirit. “I give you my promise now, and I will redeem it. Try me.”

Doubts assailed me, and I hesitated; too long, I suppose, for she impatiently exclaimed:

“I am waiting for you.”

“Yes, I will speak,” I stumbled; “but I know not how to begin. You have heard of prisoners escaping; of how they broke iron bars, and climbed down ropes made of sheets and blankets; and of others who disguised themselves and passed their keepers. You have heard of these romances. They sound unreal in life, but sometimes they are real and desperate.”

I saw my words tended to mystify and not enlighten.

“I do not see the sense in what you say,” she answered, curiously. “I hope you have not lost your reason, Cousin Allin.”

This made me speak plainly, and without further ado I said:

“This building, Cousin Priscilla, is watched—guarded.”

“I passed sailors below,” imperturbably replied she.

I continued :

“They are placed there by an old enemy of mine, and I must outwit him. He is cunning, shrewd, and a scamp. Will you help me?”

“All men are so easily deceived that ’twould not prove difficult to outwit him,” she answered, simply.

But we smiled as we gazed into each other’s eyes ; then I grew serious and added :

“My plan may be embarrassing to you ; you may not consent to it. I must have a woman’s guise to pass the guards. That cloak of yours, with the hood ; that skirt would——”

There seemed reason to hesitate ; so I stopped and waited.

“I understand that much,” she said, after a painful pause. “But why is it necessary to leave this building in disguise ? Who are these men ? What do they want ?”

“’Tis not me ; ’tis another man,” I stumbled, in trepidation.

The blood mounted to her cheeks ; the crimson flow made red and warm the lips and neck. She said, slowly :

“Then the disguise is for another ?—my cloak and skirt for another man ? Where is he ?” she continued.

I answered promptly, glad that the thing was out :

“Under the shavings at your feet.”

Involuntarily she stepped back ; I kicked the shavings aside, and the sailor stood before us.

"This is he—the man I wish to smuggle from this building. Can you still help me?"

There was defiance in my voice, and an answering challenge I read in the eyes which met mine. I knew she would accept.

"I will redeem my promise, but you do not know what you're asking."

"I understand it; but you promised."

"Yes, I promised. Take my cloak and hood; it may not fit—try it."

I adjusted it about the man's shoulders and head, then covered his face with it. 'Twas a homely fit, but it suited. Priscilla handed me the skirt; 'twas short and not so easily arranged. I labored clumsily with it—fitting, adjusting, and smoothing. Then, with the lad stooping, I told him to go; freedom was ahead of him.

A few directions sufficed to lead him straight, and down the stairs he trudged. There was no challenge at the foot, no scuffle or noise; the man had passed the sentry. I walked to the window to watch further. Across the shipyard he walked with ease, and then disappeared through the big gateway.

But there was another trouble to reckon with. When I turned Priscilla stood contemptuously before me.

"Now you have him out, what am I to do?" she asked. "Did you intend to leave me here to the tender mercies of the sailors? You've made a fine exchange. Can I parade through the streets of Boston in petticoats?"

This contingency stared me in the face for the first time. I saw I had a worse prisoner than the first. I suggested, feebly :

“Couldn’t I go home and get another dress for you?”

“Yes”—in fine scorn—“and the moment you leave the watchmen will come here to find me in this condition.”

I was nonplused, ashamed, and beaten. The haughty turn of the head, and the imperious eyes, drew further words from me :

“We might stay until dark; then I could escort you home.”

“’Tis three now; ’twill be dark in four hours,” she replied.

Four hours was a long wait. I felt then that my injury to her was irreparable. I paced up and down the loft. Was there no escape from the predicament? I glanced out of the window, and again I laid up a score against Long Jim. Some day he would have to answer for this too.

There was a humorous side to the situation. This forced itself upon me, and I well-nigh laughed. I smiled, then bit my lip in fear. Priscilla saw the movement, and an answering light seemed to dawn in her eyes. Then I yielded to nature, and cut adrift from seriousness. I knew that my cousin was acting.

“You were so serious, Cousin Allin, that I felt sorry for you,” she said. “I would have taken pity

on you had I not enjoyed it so much. Prithee, cousin, you'll never die laughing!"

I had no words for her, but in reply took her hand in mine and kissed it. That was the sign of our pact.

"So we can work away the four hours ahead," I said. "The model is here, and my tools are waiting."

Thus the little episode came to a pretty close, and for awhile I toiled at the block of wood and gazed at fair Priscilla. The afternoon waned too quickly; then in the dusk we passed the guard and left them to watch the empty building.

XVI.

PLEASANT DAYS IN THE MODEL-LOFT.

THE days in the loft with Priscilla were pleasant and enjoyable. But she did not appeal to me more than the interests of my art—a fine enthusiasm for that possessed me. Even Priscilla grew absorbed in the block of wood that slowly assumed shape and form. With chisel and mallet I would cut and carve; and while she rested I would put the inspiration of her face in the lines of the wood. There were intermissions in this work when we conversed. She admired and dissented in the same breath; captiously criticising an uneven line here, and praising warmly a curve there. She was doubtful and hopeful, satisfied and dissatisfied; but withal, consistent in her belief that it should be finished.

During the days of continuous work, no one was admitted to the loft; even Bowles was excluded from the workshop which had witnessed so many of his triumphs. 'Twas difficult to convince him that my model was not to be intruded upon; and he yielded with bad grace only after expostulations. His only right was to inspect the figure-head after the day's work was finished.

Priscilla artfully concealed her movements, coming and going with freedom, but without attracting attention. She was well able to handle her movements, so I did not concern myself about her. Her independent life had made her self-reliant, if somewhat forward. These secret meetings in the loft might have continued indefinitely, but Long Jim's appearance altered matters somewhat against my taste. Beyond peradventure he was in the employ of my Uncle Cunningham; this I ascertained without much difficulty. The thought of it was not consoling; it recalled unpleasant memories of the past. Stalwart, honest Captain Ben Swanson, of the river-boat *Hartford*, stood out boldly in mind. His words came back with redoubled meaning; his caution and warning were disquieting. If Long Jim was a fair sample of the captains employed to sail my uncle's ships, then things had come to a pretty pass. And matters looked that way now!

My conscience pricked, as I labored before the figurehead; and often I would drop chisel and mallet, and query with myself: If 'twere true that my uncle was impressing sailors under inhuman sea tyrants could I accept his hospitality and favors? Did I not thus countenance his cruelty and infamy? But there was no definite answer formed in my mind; so the conscience continued to prick, but the mental inertia was not overcome.

Then one day a climax came. Long Jim appeared at the head of the stairs. Priscilla first caught sight of his disagreeable face; I followed her glance,

and saw the evil eyes and leer. He did not attempt to retreat ; but advanced into the loft, and apologized :

“ Sorry to intrude ; ’tis unfortunate, but necessary. Mr. Bowles sent me to bring the spare sail of the yawl ; ’tis under the bench in the far corner. Couldn’t have been in a worse place.”

There was an old mildewed, disused sail bundled under the bench ; I could not deny its existence. ’Twas not for the yawl ; but ’twas not for me to say so.

“ I will get it and retire,” continued Long Jim, glancing with quickness at the whole contents of the loft. “ I told Bowles ’twould be rude to disturb ye ; but he was obdurate. Said he must have it—and at once. He’s short and choppy at times ; much like the sea he’s never sailed ; but he’s honest, an’ that’s sayin’ more’n we can of most men.”

“ Unfortunately it is,” I interrupted. “ But ’tis not necessary to say more. There’s your sail.”

“ Ah, yes, the sail ; a thousand pardons to both of ye ; nothing but duty an’ Bowles’ orders would have induced me to come here. Again, a thousand pardons ! ”

The old sail was thrust under his arms ; it was torn and patched, and age had rusted and mildewed it. When it disappeared down the stairs, I felt that a pestilence had left the room. Priscilla gave a sigh of relief.

“ He’s not a man to be trusted,” she said. “ Why did he come here ? Did he mean trouble ? ”

“ Spying, I suppose ; he’s one of my enemies ; my

worst enemy, I may say, and your father's best captain ; so I learn."

"Then he should be discharged ; I shall see about it to-night."

Thereupon I was tempted to tell all ; and with Priscilla a ready listener I rehearsed the adventures with Long Jim at Captain Barclay's tavern. "That's why he's my enemy," I finished. "He's not a man to be balked ; he'll try some day to even up matters with me ; 'tis revenge now, and may be a little fear."

"Then you must be careful ; he's not one to hesitate at anything." There were anxious thoughts expressed in her face, but I made pretence not to see them.

"No, not at anything ; he's a past master in crime," I replied lightly. "But we have no time for forebodings now ; we must finish this work. Dull care is bad company."

But a pensive mood seemed to seize her, and the afternoon dragged wearily. When night came, we walked home in silence. Two days later she said abruptly :

"Your enemy, Long Jim, has informed papa of my visits here ; he was very angry and surprised ; but not more than I when he begged me not to cause any trouble with the captain. What hold has he on papa ? There is something between them that I do not understand."

"Then I shall see that the man gets what he deserves ; I can have him punished for his villany ; that I will do at once."

"No, you must not; papa asked me to tell you to drop the matter; 'twould be unwise to irritate him. 'Tis better to appear friendly to him."

"Friendly to Long Jim? Never!"

The blood mounted to my forehead, and I repeated with emphasis: "Never!—not even for you, Cousin Priscilla!"

"I didn't ask you; I merely told you of papa's wishes; you may do as you please."

I laughed wearily at this; but in my mind evil thoughts were running wild. I knew that some day there would be a meeting; then the best man would win; until then I could do nothing. Thus thinking, I heard Priscilla say again: "Be careful, Cousin Allin; he's a dangerous man, and he would destroy you if he could."

"Yes, he would if he could; but I'm not yet to be destroyed by him. He might be the one to suffer."

There was a glow in the eyes and cheeks that charmed; 'twas the luxury of beauty, heightened by sympathy and emotion; I stood a moment all passionate in its glow. I would have stepped to her side; but the eyes held me; I dared not move.

Then the emotion passed from her face; and the spell was broken that held me in check. The passion also was chilled; I felt only the repelling coldness of an unresponsive soul. I stepped back, and gazed at the wooden face I had carved. Had I caught the fleeting expression of emotion, or was my figure as cold and haughty as the model before me? I stood a long time gazing at it—and thinking.

When we went home, I knew that Priscilla was as incapable of love as the wooden figurehead I was carving. Perfect in face and figure, she had no soul, no affection, no love. As faultless as clay could be modeled, she needed but the spirit of love breathed in her to make her perfect. Could love, affection, passion be awakened in her? Were they slumbering in her breast, needing only the event and opportunity to arouse them? Tragedy, comedy, sorrow, or suffering might touch the unused chord; but who would play the instrument when it vibrated to the tune of a new song?

XVII.

FRENCH WAYS AND INFLUENCE.

MY life had drifted now from its former channel ; the social existence of Martin and his set was strange to me. I scarcely thought of them ; and their meetings were all but a memory. The changes that had drifted in their lives were no less momentous ; and they proved fateful in their results, and international in effect. Sympathy for France had been assiduously cultivated, and antipathy for England proportionately stimulated till feeling ran high in Boston. Old wrongs and sorrows were revived, and revised. 'Twas easy to adapt them to suit new occasions ; and there was wonderful facility displayed in this.

Republican Clubs had multiplied in this atmosphere. They were formed of French sympathizers ; and their zeal for the land of Lafayette reached the bounds of decency, and overlept them. Some violently opposed the government in its neutral obligations ; incriminating those who would stay the hand of the fanatics ; condemning all who permitted their thoughts to be influenced by conservatism. Then others secretly plotted for the ruin of the United States, if it failed to support the country that had once extended a helping hand. They were extrem-

ists who were ready to adventure anything on the issue. Those who would steer a conservative course (remembering the wrongs England had inflicted on her colonies) were not in the minority, but feeble in their outspoken words. They were easily swayed by events, words, threats, harangues.

Thus matters came to a head on that night my mind was filled with thoughts of Priscilla. Martin awaited us at the door; near him stood Courtney De Kalb. The expressions were puzzling; and instinctively I thought the cause was due to the news Long Jim had spread. They stared hard at us, and I felt the flush creeping to my face. Martin, it was, who turned and said:

“You’ve heard the news at Long Wharf, Allin, and what they propose to do to-night? Are you going with us?”

I had not heard, so absorbed had I been in my work, and I said honestly: “I have taken little notice of affairs lately.”

“No. You haven’t attended any of our meetings for a month,” replied Courtney, sneeringly. “I would almost think you were a d—n English sympathizer.”

The blood stirred within me, and I answered hotly; “I might be that, and not be so bad as some who would stir up strife in our midst.”

“That sounds well, but ’tis ill-becoming one who takes no interest in the affairs of his country. Some work for love or money——”

Martin discreetly stepped between us; and I confess he did wise. I felt it within me to wipe out

some of the score between us ; and Courtney was hot with rage. I replied before he could finish his sentence, speaking over Martin's shoulder :

“ 'Tis better to be a peaceful Englishman than a French agitator, trying to imbroid the world in war.”

“ That is an insult ! and you shall rue it ! What ingratitude from a nation saved by our noble Marquis Lafayette ! ”

“ Fie on you with your Marquis Lafayette ! ”

There was danger of personal violence ; and even Martin felt it impossible to keep peace. Then it was that Priscilla ended the altercation by saying :

“ While they are quarreling, Martin, tell me what you are going to do to-night ; I am anxious to learn. Cousin Allin may not be interested, but I am.”

There was a gleam of triumph in my rival's eyes ; but I was too angry to feel the rebuff. I waited for Martin to explain. He said :

“ There is an English privateer in the harbor, bristling with guns and pirates fresh from Bermuda. Her captain is on shore, and under the cover of darkness we shall burn her to-night. 'Twill teach the pirates of the West Indies a wholesome lesson ; they have made Boston harbor a refuge once too often.”

When through I asked smartly, still suffering the sting of anger :

“ How do we know 'tis a Bermudian privateer ? Did the captain confess to the charge ? ”

Courtney took advantage of this to reply :

“ He's ready again to defend his English friends ! ”

Martin without speaking shoved a handbill before me, and I read these words :

“ THIS NIGHT

Will be performed at the steps of Long Wharf

A COMEDY OF STRIPPING THE

BERMUDIAN PRIVATEER.

CITIZENS,

Remember there have been near three hundred of our American vessels taken by these Bermudians, and have received the most barbarous treatment from these Damn'd Pirates !!!

Now, Americans, if you feel the spirit of resentment or revenge kindling in your heart, let us be united in the cause.”

This thrilling incentive to action appealed to me ; I felt the outrages that had repeatedly been inflicted upon our sailors. The pirates, whether French or English, had too long flourished ; they needed prompt dealing with. I thought of Long Jim, and his evil crew ; then the blood boiled within me. I forgot the anger against Courtney, and said warmly :

“ If this be true we should do more than burn the vessel ; we should hold the crew and bring them to justice.”

Martin answered : “ We may do that later ; first we must burn the ship under the cover of darkness.”

“ Does the crew know of it ? ” asked I. “ There are no spies or traitors about ? ”

"None but true Americans and Frenchmen know of it."

"Then the ship flies the English flag?" I added, doubtingly. "That might cause trouble for the country. Has any one seen the British consul?"

"No, and we haven't asked the d—n pirate captain if he wants his ship burnt," interrupted Courtney. "You might do that; 'twould be more to your taste than burning your fingers with us. Come, Martin, he does not want to go. He might see the British consul while we burn the ship."

With difficulty I held back speech that came to my lips. So I said to my cousin in even voice: "Go slow in this matter, Martin. You may be causing serious trouble for all. Who is at the head of the movement?"

Once more Courtney replied sneeringly: "A Frenchman! and a better patriot than you!"

"Is the French consul responsible for this midnight attack?" I demanded of Martin. "If so, you need not count me in it! I shall do everything to prevent it."

This was the occasion Courtney needed to drive home the thrust he held in readiness. With stern frown, I held back the impulse of the moment, when he said lightly:

"He turns traitor now! Did I not say he was too cowardly to go with us? Come, Martin, we go; he stays."

But Martin was undisturbed; and his reply relieved the strain: "You're too priggish, Allin! You'll miss a night of pleasure!"

"I'm too loyal to my country's interests," I suffered myself to answer, without stirring.

They moved away, Courtney casting faces back at me; and Priscilla and I standing alone. I waited for her to speak, but she was mute like me. The silence grew insufferable, so I said:

"This night's business may bring trouble to all."

"Then why not go with them? I do not see how you can stay here while they are burning the ship."

There was expectancy in the voice; but I did not fathom it, so baffling were her moods. I replied quickly: "I shall go the wharf, but not as an emissary of the French consul. I go to see for myself. If a pirate ship, I help to destroy her; if not, I shall help to save her."

"Save her against a mob?" she asked quietly, but not without a note in her voice that stung.

"Yes, against any number of mobs, if necessary; that's my purpose."

"Then I shall go with you; I love a dramatic scene."

There was but one answer to spring to my lips; that I spoke sharply: "No, you cannot! 'Twould be dangerous; I might not be able to protect two."

"Then I shall go alone!"

There was determination in the voice that brooded no interference; so I deferred answer for some time. When she drew her cloak about her head, and stepped down, 'twas too late to protest; then we knew that we understood each other better.

XVIII.

THE "BETSY" BRINGS TROUBLE.

THE dusk of an early evening was already settling over the city ; and we walked through its mantle of gloom toward the flickering light of the water front. As we proceeded signs of unusual activity became apparent. The fitful gleams of lights in front of taverns and at street corners showed many people collecting in knots and companies. Their footsteps tended in one direction ; the docks were the central point of attraction ; and thither we followed.

The streams of dark forms converged toward Long Wharf ; the side streets grew in noisy, turbulent disorder. There were scrambling and hurrying : jeers and jests, low whisperings and loud denunciations ; coarse words and language that sounded ominous. Shrinking back from this medley of humanity, I appealed once again to Priscilla, saying : " This is no place for you ! Let us return ! "

But for reply, she said : " 'Tis too late to retreat ! You must take me through it now ! "

The surging crowd nearly carried her from her feet ; but she held bravely to me, and urged me onward. The broad expanse of the harbor was now spread out before us, and through the lane of living

forms the lights on the ships anchored outside could be seen. The night was dark, but clear; the millions of stars overhead found a transparent reflection in the water. A breath of salt air swept the street; it came to me a refreshing breeze to dispel the foul and greasy odor of the crowd around. My neighbors were not of the best; many were in leather jerkins and rough cocked hats. They were of the ignorant and excitable element, easily stirred to strife or disorder. Here and there among them were men of better breeding, some decked out in clothes that marked their high position; others were men of pleasure, young fops who found drunken pleasure in anything that promised excitement. There were men of power and ability, whose words served to encourage and inflame the minds of the mob; they were the leaders of the outbreak. French sympathy had broken loose to plunge the country in trouble with England. All the Republican clubs of Boston were there!

'Twas not a pleasant outlook for one who understood the drift of current politics. There was fanaticism enough in Boston hot-heads to make war with England again inevitable. The firmness of the government in keeping free from all entanglement with European politics had been wise and discreet; a strict neutrality had been maintained with both France and England, while they grappled each other in one of their worst wars. This did not please France; and her sympathizers were intent upon dragging the young republic into the devastating war. By this

time the growing commerce of Boston and the seaboard had made our fleet of merchantmen of value to either combatant, and we were in a position to cripple either nation to some considerable extent. But that did not behoove us to go to war with either party. God knows that we had reason—good and sufficient—to sink the ships of either without a word of warning. Damnable indeed were the stories of outrages on the high seas, committed in the name of civilization! But what position would we occupy when the conflict was over? Our land was still bleeding and suffering from the wounds of the long contest for freedom; and another war might forever stifle the feeble national life.

But our sailors and seamen were to be protected! Frenchman or Englishman would have to suffer for any insult to the flag! So when the crowd shouted, my spirit moved with them, and breathed a refrain.

“Death to the pirates! Burn their ships! They steal our ships, and imprison our sailors! Now we’ll burn them! Damn all pirates and privateers.”

The air was heavy with the sounds of hoarse cries and muffled foot-tread; the tumult and excitement increasing as we proceeded. Pressing closely through the mob, I held Priscilla beyond the danger of serious contact; and forgot that I had recently been averse to the night’s whole proceedings. To the crowded wharf the doomed ship was warped, and by her side surged tumultuous men.

Near enough to scan her closely, I stood a moment to make the best of my vantage point. She was in-

nocent in outline; common and simple in rigging, with neither gun nor casemate in sight. Her decks were littered with loose cordage; bales of merchandise, frightened and cowering animals and humanity, crates and coops of poultry. The British flag drooped from the main truck; across the stern I read the legend: *The Betsy of St. Croix*.

The peaceable trader and merchantman were marked on every side; was it a trick of the seamen? A pirate would not boldly enter the harbor of Boston with guns and ammunition exposed; some effort at least would be made to disguise her ugly profession. So the *Betsy* might, with all her chicken coops and merchandise, be a pirate of the seas, with a bloody record behind her.

There was food for thought in the littered decks; it sobered some, and brought doubts to the mind. The howling mob was unmindful of this considerate element; it cried for vengeance. Even the words of the doughty captain, whether pirate or innocent Englishman, were smothered in the frightful human clamor. Once he raised his hands to command silence; the howls and shouts made his wordless speech a pantomime; 'twas mockery to call it justice. This angered, and aroused the ire in me; no true American should meet an emergency in such cowardly manner. Seizing a torch from a hand near by, I sprang through the surging mob, and held it above the heads; its wavering, flickering light brought silence when words failed.

"Citizens of Boston and all good Americans!" I

shouted. "Let us not be ashamed of this night's work! We must have fair play; give the captain a chance to speak. Whether he be pirate or Englishman, as he claims, we will be the judge. But let him speak his defence. If he is guilty no man will go further than I in punishing the pirates of the sea—the scum and scuff of England and France!"

Cheers greeted these words; but hisses were all about me. I cared not for these so that my point was gained. The captain of the *Betsy* spoke, proclaiming his innocence in clumsy, but honest fashion. Evidently the scenes of the night had embarrassed him, and he stumbled lamely; for then the mob laughed and jeered him. The more he protested, the greater seemed the glee of the crowd. Then he waxed wroth, and threatened; that sealed his doom.

"Touch a plank of this good ship, or pull down that flag, ye'll regret it," he blustered, English-like, "Ye dare not touch it; to-morrow your town would be bombarded if ye did. I stand under the flag of England!"

Swelling pride and dignity puffed out the cheeks and form of the foolish captain; but he did not see the electrical thrill that he had started. The crowd, enraged at the words of defiance, plunged forward with bull-like impetuosity. I anticipated it, shouting once more:

"Stop a moment! I appeal to all Americans here to hesitate for an instant, and consider the rashness——"

What more I said I know not; a flash shot out of

the darkness, and dizziness spread over me. A blow from somewhere had cut short my unfinished appeal. But there was not entire loss of consciousness; I dropped from my high perch, and felt the blood trickling down my neck.

The mob lunged forward, and dismantled the ship, plunging overboard in mad frenzy all that they could lay hands on. The river round about soon reeked with cargo-tuff and broken rigging. Then a light flashed skyward; the heavens were bathed in the illumination; and the *Betsy* had brought new trouble to Boston in her funeral-pyre.

In the dimness of the light at first, I saw feebly the faces around me; then slowly forms took definite shape. There was Priscilla before me; and by her side Martin and Courtney De Kalb. My first impulse was to crush the latter to the earth; and then inquire whether he had cut short my protests.

But between them, and apparently with them, stood another; his face was lighted with a sneer of triumph. Long Jim was my victim; his was the hand that had been stretched out to silence my words of protest; there was no doubt of it.

The hatred of months seemed suddenly to seethe between us; the glare of eyes burned with fury, triumph in one, and revenge-to-be-attained in the other. The onset was not unexpected; even those who stood by saw it coming. I did not measure the force of the blow I delivered; but yielded only to the desire to crush the man. Consequences did not trouble me.

When he lay before me, apparently dead, I wondered at the strength which my fury had put in the blow. Still, there was no regret; 'twas exultation, not fear or remorse. Life was of little account to such a brute; what mattered it if he were dead?

He lay there for full ten minutes; then his beady, vengeful eyes opened. The glow of triumph had gone from them; the madness of hatred had come to take its place. For very anger and agitation, the man lay there, unable or unwilling to rise. Cool, calculating energy also breathed from the livid face, and his words were uttered with a whistling cadence of suppressed emotion: "Some day we shall settle it; then the devil can't save you."

I replied with a well satisfied sneer: "But the devil didn't help you this time."

He rose slowly from his position; faced me a moment with relentless murder in his eyes; bowed sullenly, in mock politeness, and moved away in the crowd. He limped as he disappeared down the lane of human forms. Then it was that Courtney said:

"That was a pretty blow you gave him; it served him right; but a street brawl is never becoming to a gentleman."

The blood was stirring hot within my veins; and the sting of this remark brought hasty reply; "A gentleman is always ready to protect his honor."

"Not with fists," the dandy made answer. "That's vulgar and plebeian."

I understood the challenge; the words were veiled, but the meaning plain. So with coolness, I added:

"How would you have me fight?—with sword or pistol?"

There was triumph in the eyes that glared at me and the words were exultant: "With the sword, sir; 'tis more to my taste."

"Swords 'tis then; to-morrow at two on the beach below the docks. Nobody is there at that hour; we can have things all our way."

"I shall gratify you with pleasure. Have you a sword, or shall I bring two?"

This insult lost its mark, for I replied surlily: "No French blade for me! 'tis too treacherous: I'll try a new English blade."

"Ah! I see! 'tis English against French! Then I can fight with more spirit! I hate the English; but the Americans, I have no grudge against them."

I replied not; but looked intently at Priscilla. She had not attempted to interfere; was she content with the agreement? 'Twas a foolish act I had performed; that I knew. The sword was no weapon for me; 'twas as strange to me as a woman's knitting needle. 'Twas like suicide to face Courtney with sword in hand. Yet fear did not disturb my mind; nor did regret come over me. For the love of a woman, I doubted not, Courtney would run me through on the morrow—if he could. If physical strength counted, he would not; but what was that against skill in a duel with swords?

XIX.

THE MIDNIGHT LESSONS.

HOME had no fascination for me that night; so I turned from the docks, and walked rapidly toward the quarter of the town where the shops were located. My desire was to have a sword—a mere plaything at least—which I could swing and dangle in the hands. Possibly there was time for a few lessons in fencing; that seemed absurd, but I entertained the idea.

In one of the shop-windows there was a collection of weapons displayed—fine guns and pistols, swords and cutlasses of wondrous shapes and patterns. Some had been captured from the privateers and picaroons of the coast (they bore strange Spanish designs and figures); others were of English and French pattern, brought over to sell to the Americans; and a few were relics of the troublesome days when good pewter spoons and plates were melted down to make arms to fight the enemy.

I stood looking at the handiwork of the gunsmith and swordmaker; then I ventured in the dimly-lighted shop, and inspected the sights with the eye of a connoisseur. A solitary purchaser stood before the shopkeeper; he was intent upon examining some of the curiously-wrought blades that were displayed before him. I walked to his side, and listened.

“This sword, sir, belonged to the famous pirate,

Captain Lesser, who was captured last year and executed," spoke the shrewd dealer. "'Tis a fine English sword, made of the best Sheffield steel, and able, I warrant, to stand against any French or Damascus blade. I should like to see it wielded by one as competent as you, sir."

"It has all the appearance of being a fine blade," quietly answered the customer, running a finger down the edge. "'Tis true all you say,—I'll warrant that."

I stepped boldly up, and said: "Then, sir, if you are a stranger to this shopkeeper, and you give me your word of honor that the sword is of excellent English steel, I will purchase it."

The two stared at me; but I had eyes only for the customer, whose face attracted me. This was strong and determined, with eyes keen and attractive; the body was firmly-knit, and well-formed. He inspected me; then courteously said: "If you have determined to buy this sword, I hope it is to be used in a good cause."

"A good cause it is. But——"

I hesitated; the stranger remained passively inquisitive until I proceeded: "The fact is, I'm to fight a duel to-morrow at two, and I have never had a sword in my hand."

"That is very foolish unless the one you fight is equally ignorant of the art of swordsmanship."

"Sir, he is an expert," I answered honestly, "and one of the best swordsmen in America, and France, too, for all I know."

"Then he chose swords as the weapons to fight with?"

When I replied, he looked puzzled; then in the same quiet voice:

"Is there no way to withdraw honorably?"

"I fear not. No, it cannot be!"

"Your honor is at stake, I judge—or that of a woman?"

The blood mounted to my cheek at this delicate query, and for a moment I was at a loss how to reply. But I soon recovered, and said:

"Neither; 'tis a matter of a quarrel between us,—long brooding, but here."

He replied in a way that I did not like, but with a smile that disarmed me: "And for a woman's sake you permitted yourself to be drawn into a duel with swords." Then as I made no answer, he added: "I trust the woman is worthy such a headstrong lover."

I would have spoken, vexed at this, had he not said more kindly: "I shall not permit you to go to the slaughter unprepared. If I mistake not you have superb strength, and an excellent wrist for sword action. I know something about the art myself, and I shall take you in hand and give you some lessons."

Surprised and pleased at the words, I would have acknowledged my gratitude; but the stranger turned, and thus addressed the shopkeeper:

"You have rooms in the back of your shop where I can give this pupil his first lessons. I will take

them for the night; and we will spend our time in fencing."

The shopkeeper assented, seeing a ready sale for his sword at a fair price; everything, he assured us, would be in readiness for our convenience. I paid the price of the sword, exorbitant though it was, and took the weapon in hand. 'Twas a narrow strip of steel, bending like a whip, and snapping back with a hiss. It seemed too light and slender for one of my strength, and I feared to handle it with roughness.

"'Twill not break easily," said my new friend, divining my thoughts, "but at a disadvantage it might snap in twain at the first blow. In your hands it might; your muscles are like iron."

Then with a desire not to make me conceited he added:

"But you must remember that strength counts little in this game—not until you have learned the tricks. Skill first; then strength of wrist and arm. Remember that!"

There was soon occasion to remember it; for stripped to the waist, I faced him sword in hand. Then with the gentleness and ease of a woman knitting, he parried my fierce blows and lunges until I was wet with sweat. Skill brought my strength in humbleness to the dust; nay, it made it a weakling. I was soon winded and exhausted; but my instructor was as cool and self-possessed as at the beginning.

"You will make an excellent swordsman in time," he said pleasantly; "but you must first get your

strength under control. 'Tis skill of wrist movement you need most."

With great patience, he showed me how to parry and thrust; how to feint and strike. Slowly and surely, I grasped the points he taught me; for three hours we labored and fought, until midnight was long past.

"Now sleep until morning; then come here, and we will have more practice when you are fresh," he said. "I'll warrant then you can meet your rival without sure death to yourself."

"But your name, sir? Tell me to whom I am indebted for this instruction."

He shrugged his shoulders, and made slow reply: "I am in Boston only for a short stay; my name matters not, let it pass. I'm your unknown benefactor, that's all."

He would have passed on, but again I detained him.

"I would ask you to be my secoud to-morrow if I but knew your name."

There was doubt in his mind, but he hesitated only a minute.

"I may do that, too, and still be nameless; you can depend upon me to be present, and support you. I would see the outcome of this strange duel. Mayhap it will teach me a lesson."

"Sir," persisted I, "I would count it a favor to know your name. But if you wish it otherwise, I cease to ask it."

We parted for the night; he returning to the shop,

and I trudging homeward through the night to sleep a few feverish hours in bed. My thoughts were busy with the night's incidents, but mostly with the stranger who had so befriended me. There was in the courtly manners and face that which charmed; yet there was vague distrust written there too. I knew I might dislike the man, even as I now liked him for his favors. He was courtly and polite; and more formal in his dress and deportment than Courtney.

"I wot not he's a man of parts and adventure," I mused. "He loves adventure for its own sake; that's why he joins me on the morrow in this duel."

This conclusion he bore out in word and action when I met him on the morrow; he looked the adventurer, ready to play with swords or pistols with life as the stake. He greeted me with a smile, and the words: "I wish I could try your antagonist after he runs you through. Is the lady in question pretty and high-born enough to warrant my taking up your quarrel?"

I stammered in confusion, with anger mixed therein: "She's my cousin—and handsome."

"Ah, your cousin! Then she would welcome me to take up the quarrel if you suffered?"

I answered slowly, not knowing how serious the man was: "I cannot say."

"Well, I shall console with her if you fall."

Further conversation was stopped by the appearance of my cousin and Courtney. Martin spoke shortly, and to the point:

"Allin, this must stop here! You two cannot fight! Courtney will kill you in the first round. Apologize to him and let us be friends."

There was no sincerity in these words; Martin loved adventure if he was not endangered; so I answered as short;

"Let him do the apologizing; I came here to fight."

Courtney showed his teeth in a smile, clean, white and bristling; and, bowing, replied:

"As you wish. The swords will settle it."

Martin stepped back, saying: "Then my work is done; I have tried to stop such rashness. Who have you for a second, Allin? His face looks familiar; is he a man of note?"

"He is my friend," I answered sharply; "and if I fall he will look after my effects. I have given him this right."

The stranger advanced and bowed his acknowledgment of the salutes. Martin turned upon him, and said: "'Tis an ill-turn of fortune that should make me serve as the second of the man who would kill my own cousin."

"War and quarrels often separate friends and relatives," was the quiet reply. "This I judge is only a lover's quarrel, and a slight wound will satisfy honor?"

For reply Courtney snapped a blade of grass with his sword, and walked to his position. He was ready, and prepared for the encounter. I threw off my coat, rolled up my sleeves; and the knotted muscles of my arms stood out boldly."

My second pointed to them, and said. "If 'twas a matter of strength only 'twould not take long to settle the dispute."

Courtney also looked, and for a moment a slight tremor seemed to pass over him; but he answered lightly:

"Muscles don't count in this game unless you know how to use them."

"Quite right! Quite right! But these muscles are trained; I found that out last night in fencing with him; his sword arm is like steel."

"Can he fence?" mumbled Courtney. Then realizing his blunder he said almost fiercely:

"Time is up now; we promised to be ready at two; 'tis half after that now."

I made no answer in words; but took my position, and presented my sword. The practice of the night and morning had put confidence in me; and I showed the little wrist movements of the swordsman with no little vanity. As we crossed swords, I could read the expression of doubt in Courtney's mind. My instructor had advised me of my weak and strong points; this I displayed at once to my adversary's dismay.

Courtney knew the power of my muscles; and he was swordsman enough to know the value of such strength if skilfully used. I smiled with confidence as I parried his little thrusts. So well did my show of skill work that he became wary and defensive in his play; even nervousness occasionally made him bungle in his cuts.

But my art was superficial; 'twas developed in a night and morning; and at the best could hardly stand up against the skill of a veteran. By degrees my rival's courage returned, and he pressed me with more energy. The hand and arm were swift to cut and parry; sure in tierce and lunge. With deftness and ease, he pushed aside my heaviest blows; and made my every act seem clumsy. My superior strength could not stand up against such science, and by degrees I retreated. The perspiration broke out freely on my forehead; and darkness blurred my vision.

Then I remembered my instructor's words. Your enemy is never so weak as when pressing you hard. I rallied all my powers, and watched my opportunity. With sudden temerity, I turned from the defensive to the offensive; and in an unguarded moment nearly caught my antagonist in a weak point. The danger that threatened him brought caution back to him; but it threw me off my guard. I pressed him fiercely, striving to gain more advantage: then a sharp prick on my left arm sent a thrill of pain through my body. Maddened at this, I lunged out more fiercely, and again received a prick; this time on the hand. Even then I had not learned my lesson; fire and anger rushed me forward, and I became a helpless victim in Courtney's hands.

He laughed softly, quietly; and in that I read my doom; yet fear did not seize me, but the maddening sensation that I had lost. I struck at his guard to break it down; for a moment he retreated a step;

then with cool daring he played with me, and let me exhaust my strength in hopeless beating against his guard. One more vicious thrust, and his parry was followed by a swift and deadly cut. I saw it coming, but 'twas in vain that I tried to stop it; yet my blade fell with a sickening thud upon his just as the point entered the flesh of my hip. The sudden force of the blow shattered the blades in twain, close up to the hilts. Mine fell to the ground with a ring; Courtney's stuck to my hip, three inches buried in bone and flesh.

Both were disarmed; but the pain of the cut—and the mortification of defeat—brought me to the point of desperation. I grasped the hand that held the broken hilt, and for a moment there was a crushing of flesh and bones that appeased my anger. When I flung the hand from me, I was not more pale from the loss of blood than Courtney from the pain in arm and hand. I thought for a moment that he would faint; then seeing he did not I turned to my wound.

My second was by my side; but 'twas Priscilla's voice which asked: "Are you hurt much, cousin Allin?"

Remembering bitterly that she was the cause of the duel, which she must have known would go against me, I answered shortly:

"No; only a flesh wound; but Courtney may need you. He has a bad arm and hand."

"Courtney! Was he injured?"

I laughed softly, but made no reply. Not one, in

the suddenness of the final clash, had noticed my action ; it had been like a mere hand-shaking--an acknowledgment of defeat. 'Twas this which gave me pleasure ; and when they dressed my wounds I smiled at the pain.

XX.

THE SECRET OF THE FIGUREHEAD.

MY instructor and second in the duel was as skilful a surgeon as a duelist; and with rare tenderness he dressed my wounds, and bundled me off to Carroll's Tavern. I would not return to my uncle Cunningham's; and Martin did not urge me. In the back room of the tavern, I could rest and nurse my wound in quietness.

Here only my new friend came at first to see me; he was nurse now as well as fencing-master, and a rare nurse he proved. He brought such wines and delicacies as I needed, and urged me to eat and drink. Then with knowledge and science, he explained the reason of my defeat; showed me where I made mistakes, and how they should have been avoided; and made me see my adversary's weak points. So well did he discourse that I said in confidence:

"If I had it to do over again, I would come out victor. 'Tis a gentle art, but a good one; I shall learn it for the future."

From fencing he turned to medicine and surgery, discoursing with equal knowledge upon these sciences. His abundance of wisdom astonished me; there was little he did not know. My own wound he dissected;

and, in truth remarked: "Had the blade gone half an inch this way 'twould have severed the tendon; that would have crippled you for life; or half an inch the other way 'twould have let out the blood that no man could have stopped; that would have been death in a few minutes."

This was all interesting, and full of pith and marrow; but when he began to discourse upon the beauty of women I found less to attract me. He was a connoisseur here too; and he touched lightly upon court beauties, and the virtues of women in common life. There was rare judgment in his descriptions, and I wondered more at the versatility of the man. Then, after an hour's conversation, he added:

"Your cousin Priscilla, now, is a virgin of great beauty and power; she has permitted me to call on her; and I have found her entertaining and full of wisdom. We have decided to be friends for family reasons; and I like her ways the more I know her."

"What family reasons?" I was forced to ask, puzzled at the man's remark.

"Old family acquaintances, and, for all I know to the contrary, blood connections. The Burrs and the Cunninghams were well related before the war; I remember much of the ties that bound them together. 'Twas the long struggle for freedom that separated us. Now I am glad that we can renew the relationship. I count it a favor to know Priscilla better."

That night, tossing on the couch, wracked with pain and fever, I conned over this speech many

times. I liked not the new phase of affairs. I feared that I had introduced a new rival, more courtly than my wounded adversary, and more a man of the world than any in Boston; and withal more dangerous as a friend of Priscilla's than any I knew.

Memories of my beautiful cousin surged through my dreams; she came as a model in the loft, where peace and quietness reigned; then she stood at my bedside with mocking smile at my misery. Her heartlessness cut deeper than words; had she renounced me for Courtney, or, worse yet, for her new friend? In the bitterness of pain and anguish I queried: Was she worth the trouble and danger of it all?

Visions of the sea floated before my mind; and with eyes turned toward the distant waters of the harbor my old longing to seek refuge and excitement on its waves returned. With this came thoughts of Edith, and the foolish promise she had exacted from me. That promise was now no longer in force; on the morrow I could ship on the first craft that sailed out of the harbor if duty called. Nevertheless, memories of Edith, and of the life on the Connecticut, were sweet; from the disturbing thoughts of the present I drifted idly into the peace and rest of other days. When slumber came, I still dreamed, passing from the visions of consciousness to the unrealities of the unknown world of sleep.

Day was bright when I awoke; the sun poured its rays through curtain and window, reflecting light shadows on bed and floor. Dully conscious of this, my

mind rested; and then slowly took in the situation. By the bed stood Priscilla and Aaron Burr, with the sunlight streaming full upon them. 'Twas he of the courtly manners and full knowledge who first spoke, saying suavely: "There is nothing like sleep to refresh body and mind. Your cousin here wanted me to bring her over; she has come when slumber has made you whole."

I replied not; the words grated upon nerves; the fever of the night was still in the blood. Priscilla said:

"I was very anxious about you, Cousin Allin; I have not slept much thinking about you."

I murmured something, saying words that sounded hollow and meaningless, and then added: "Is Courtney improving? I hope I did nothing serious to his hand."

"He is doing well," answered Priscilla, with a tightening of the lips; "he was not seriously hurt; he is out again."

"Tell him then that I regret the whole occurrence," I said slowly. "I am sorry that I fought the duel with him."

Both hearers were silent at this confession; then my fencing master and nurse said, with an ill-concealed sneer: "The apology is rather late in the day; why did you not think of it when I first urged you?"

I made no reply; my thoughts were moving slowly; there was something tugging at the heart that seemed to bring pain. Priscilla touched my head with a soft hand; and her voice was low and sweet as in

the days when we worked in the loft: "Had you fever in the night?"

"Yes, Cousin Priscilla, and feverish dreams; I saw the figurehead in my visions, and it had turned its head to the wall. I know not the meaning of it."

I smiled feebly; laugh, I could not, from sheer weakness and misery.

They lingered for some time, Priscilla showing an inclination to remain unduly. Then when they departed, I grew easier; a load seemed lifted from my brain. I slept without dream or fever.

Three days measured the limit of my confinement; then I walked forth once more, strong in the enjoyment of youth. The wound in the side gave me pain; but not weakness.

My footsteps were turned toward the docks. I first sought the old model-loft where the product of my labor stood idle. Nothing had been touched since the fateful night I had left the place with Priscilla. The tools of my trade were scattered on bench and floor; the shavings were tumbled in graceful curves everywhere; dust had accumulated over all. In the corner the figurehead stood, placidly gazing down at the deserted shop.

I stood before it, intently scanning its features. Three days of absence had faded from my mind the features that had seemed branded there. I was disappointed in its appearance; the face was not what I had expected; 'twas more puzzling than satisfying. There were the features and beauty of Priscilla; that was certain; but blended with them were lines

that I had never drawn from her face. I sighed, as I studied the face; then turned away with a new light. The artist in me had idealized the model; it had made a Priscilla warmer and more human than the one who had posed for me.

The reverie that held me seemed to unwrap the future. There was a parting of the ways; one led to the sea and beyond; the other to the land where nothing but dissatisfaction could be found. The ideal could never be realized; so then let it be forever—unfinished.

“’Tis better so,” I said. “Let some one who comes after me read the story of the unfinished model; if the riddle pleases him to solve it he will find his reward; if it puzzles and bewilders, he will leave it as I do.”

I turned the figurehead to the wall, covered it with tarpaulin, and turned to go. I would have said a word of farewell to my work; but by my side Priscilla suddenly appeared, mounting the stairs swiftly and noiselessly.

“What are you doing, Cousin Allin?” she asked. “Are you covering me up to ship away? That is a rough and unpleasant winding-sheet if you intend to bury me.”

“The character of the winding-sheet matters not,” I murmured.

“But surely you are not going to leave it here unfinished. That would be cruel, and an insult to me.”

“I cannot finish it,” I answered simply; “I have lost the inspiration.”

"'Twill come back," returned she, with a smile. "He is a poor artist who cannot wait. I fear you make as impatient an artist as a lover, Cousin Allin."

There was no mistaking the challenge in the eyes; but I heeded not, and replied dully:

"'Tis true I am a failure at both."

She pointed to the figurehead, and her voice seemed a reproach, as she said: "I do not understand that, Cousin Allin. It makes me sad and envious at times. You did not know that when you were sick at the Tavern, I crept up here, and gazed for hours at it! No, but I did; it fascinated me. You have created something there, Cousin Allin, that is not in me. At first I thought 'twas some other face—Edith's probably—and that made me furious; I wanted to destroy it—mar it. But it held me, and I could not get beyond its spell; 'twas the soul of it that I wanted to fathom. Cousin Allin, I think you have made me better and nobler by that carving."

I stood perplexed, bewildered; the old love returned, and I would have thrown myself at her feet; but she was not gazing at me. 'Twas beyond, she saw; and I knew that her thoughts were not of love.

"What is it that you have put in the face that is not in me?" she continued. "I do not understand it."

I made no reply; I had none to make. Instead I drew the figurehead from its corner, and uncovered the face. The two of us gazed at it in silence; then Priscilla spoke again:

"You must finish it, Cousin Allin. I want to see it completed; it may contain a lesson for me; I do

not understand it now. There is something that I may grasp in time ; can you help me ? ”

“ When you came upon me, I was bidding farewell to the face,” said I, slowly ; “ I had no more interest in it. But now—if you say so, Priscilla—I will finish it—finish it, cost me what it may. We may then solve the riddle together.”

“ I do say it, Cousin Allin ; finish it.”

I bowed my head a little, knowing that she had again drawn me from my resolve. Thus was it ever to be ; her bidding was my law, nay, her wish my only desire.

XXI.

EDITH COMES TO BOSTON.

WORK drew me again to the loft; and the old life was renewed. 'Twas a pleasant, if somewhat unsatisfactory, association that made up the days and weeks which followed. Priscilla was ever ready to pose; and her presence spread new life and interest about the old loft. Of the visions of the troublesome days of the duel, they fled dimly in the past; even the actors therein I would forget. None but Priscilla seemed real; the others I would make as mere remembrances.

But life outside the model-loft was too real and earnest to make dreams of the substantial things of existence. Martin and Courtney I saw less of (the latter having recovered from his wound was now bitterer than ever toward me); but Aaron Burr, the man who had befriended me in a critical moment—he who had stood by me as second in the duel—I saw and met persistently. He had found it convenient to remain in Boston beyond his allotted time; and this I doubted not was due to Priscilla. He had grown friendly and intimate with all (particularly so with Priscilla): even Courtney showing a grudging liking for him; and Martin was not averse to treating him as a man of note.

There were manners and deportment in the man, which made him a favorite with most; but as for me I saw little in these to attract. His courtly bearing was hardly to my liking; and his ready wit and humor savored too strongly of insincerity; yet withal I was not his enemy, secretly or openly. Not even when in the company of Priscilla, I had to admit, did I wish him ill. They made a fine pair together; she with her queenly air and beautiful face and figure; he with his courtly bearing, keen eyes, and handsome face. Their conversation savored of wit and repartée—for he was ever ready with his tongue to praise or blame—and in the company of Priscilla he showed off his talents to the best advantage. Yet he did not excel Priscilla in wit or humor or repartée; she was ever his equal in conversation. This pleased and stimulated, attracting him as much as her physical beauty, and always leaving something more to be desired.

There was not much in this new friendship that added to my delight, 'twas rather saddening than otherwise, for I felt the man's polish widened a gulf between us. He was more to Priscilla's liking than a simple carver of wooden figureheads. His life had been full of adventure and excitement, which a strange fortune had brought to him, brightening and polishing the rough exterior, if not the heart; and he knew the value thereof. Even the hours in the model-loft, when Priscilla posed for me, brought only part compensation for this new change in our lives; they were not self-satisfying moments as of old.

My uncle gave many fine entertainments at his

palatial home; and all the families of note attended these brilliant affairs. Priscilla was easily the reigning belle; and Aaron Burr crowned her with queenly honors. He it was who led the dance with her, and escorted her to the seat of honor at the table; again it was he who made happy speeches in toasts drunk in her honor; and when midnight brought the ball to a close Aaron Burr started the procession to bid her adieu for the night and pay homage to her peerless beauty.

There grew up within my heart a feeling that my pretty cousin was in need of such homage: she loved to have courtly attention; and she lived now in an atmosphere that brought new happiness to her. The glow on her cheek intensified; the eyes grew merry with pleasure and excitement; and in the stately dance she was the mirth and attraction of the party. None saw the change more than I; it left its impress on my life that none realized, but all might have read with ease. My work in the loft drew me away from the balls, where I cut a sorry figure indeed; and I fell to brooding over the face that I had carved.

Then one day, when affairs were mixed and full of perplexity, sudden news brought a change. There came word to me that Mr. Brewer had died a fortnight before, and Edith was living in Boston with an aunt. Remembrances of one who had befriended me sent a pang of remorse to the heart. How I had neglected his kindly offices! The news spread out visions of the days when Boston had been a myth-

ical Mecca of hopes and ambitions. It had been the kindly warning and advice of Mr. Brewer that had marked my direction in many moments of uncertainty. That he was no more stung me! Had he felt the ungratefulness of my neglect?

But there was no need of wasted sadness over the dead; the living needed comfort and sympathy. Edith was near, and in my eagerness to see her, I dropped my tools immediately. I knew the whereabouts of her aunt's home, and thither I hurried. 'Twas in a modest quarter of the city; much less fashionable than the home of my uncle; but there was neatness and comfort that could not always be purchased by wealth.

As I wended my way toward the place, I fell to wondering at the changes which fortune had brought. Would I find her the same? Would she see in me one who had outgrown the ideals of youth? Poor Edith! I could not well fit her in this Boston life. She was not a girl like Priscilla, born to shine and command, imperious by nature and training, and with the artful graces which made power and strength. Edith's beauty was of a different type; 'twould bring happiness to one man, but hardly heart-sickness to many.

Unless she had changed! Time and circumstances were powerful to mold new character and ambitions! Had they marked Edith for one of its magical changes? Would she be the same blue-eyed, golden-haired girl of yore? I found myself dreading the interview; hoping that she would be the same;

and yet fearful lest disappointment should be my lot.

By the time I stood in front of Mrs. Miller's home, where she was living, my mind was confused, agitated. Inside the cool hall, there were all the quiet signs of a modest and pleasant home. I stood a moment, and then laughed at my own folly. Had I become a weakling to grow nervous in conjuring up the past? So, when Edith appeared, I was ready and eager to greet her. She was taller, fairer, more mature; yet Edith unchanged.

"Allin, how you have grown," she greeted, before I could find words to say. "I am almost afraid of you. Why, you must be a foot taller—and older."

"Yes, years older," murmured I, with a laugh that sounded strange.

Unconsciously, I was comparing her with Priscilla—Priscilla with her dark eyes and hair, her imperious ways; Edith with her golden beauty, her glow of sympathetic womanhood! Totally dissimilar; yet not unlike in some appearances. There was a high type of beauty in each; in one warmth and love; in the other coldness and haughtiness.

Then said she petulantly: "Have you become dumb, Allin? 'Tis not like you to be shy and modest."

I answered quickly, rousing from my reverie: "No, not dumb, Edith, but lost in admiration. You have changed; changed for the better so that I know not what to say. I left you as Edith, my little play-mate; I find you now a woman, taller, fairer, stronger. Shall I still call you Edith?"

"Didn't I call you Allin?" she asked, with a winsome smile. Then with frowning brows: "No, I should call you Mr. Winfield; I forgot myself."

"No, no, not that," I protested, though I knew she but simulated. "It must ever be Allin."

She brightened with a smile that played about her lips; there were dimples also in the cheeks as she made answer:

"Allin is prettier than Mr. Winfield; I like it better. So let it be, if you say it—Allin and Edith."

"Yes, forever—Edith and Allin."

There were many things to talk about; many remembrances to recall; and time was precious. We grew young and confidential again. There were joy and passing pleasure in renewing old associations; and both felt the broken ties strengthening. I soon found that Mr. Brewer's death had come suddenly, and the blow had left sorrow in its wake; but we were too happy to dwell long upon that. The change had broken up the old home on the Connecticut, where life had indeed, I judged, become monotonous. In her Boston home, Edith was not altogether alone.

"Aunt Gladys is very kind to me," she explained, "and her nephew is always with us. You do not know him—Captain Packer? He is not Aunt Gladys's nephew (but she calls him that); and is no blood relation to either of us. But he is so good and kind that we feel as if he were a cousin in good standing. He took everything in hand when papa was sick; and he hurried me off here at once. I declare

he orders me about as if I were a child ; but I like it, Allin."

I looked down less kindly at the animated face, replying : " I never heard of Captain Packer before ; is he a captain of a vessel—an old sea-dog ? "

" Goodness, no ; Allin, he's not at all old—no older than you. But he's been everywhere. Aunt Gladys said he went to sea at sixteen ; he was captured by pirates, and nearly lost his life. But he escaped ; and now he is captain of his own ship. He declares he will take me to sea with him some day, and show me the world. But I won't go ; I never want to leave the land."

This praise of Captain Packer did not please me ; it portended no good of our friendship. I envied him his sea record ; and with a little pang of regret I remembered that 'twas Edith who had kept me from the sea. I thought it unwise of her then to bestow such admiration upon one who had sailed the ocean while young ; this I showed in tone and words, saying a little bitterly :

" I might have been a sea captain by this time had you not prevented."

" What do you mean, Allin ? "—and her words were innocently uttered.

I would have spoken hastily ; but curbing my astonishment, I replied quietly : " You do not remember the promise when I left ? You made me say that I would never go to sea—not of my own free will."

The blood mounting in a blush to her face made her prettier, and I wondered at it as she said : " I

had forgotten it, Allin; but I did not suppose you would take such a promise seriously; we were only children then, and we promised much."

"Yes—much—too much," replied I slowly. "Our parting came at an awkward time, for we were planning many things."

"Indeed! How well you remember! I supposed you had forgotten those days; they seem so long ago."

In my own mind I knew they had often been blotted out for months at a time; but now they seemed nearer and dearer than ever. 'Twas provoking to hear Edith confess that they had long since escaped her memory.

I said bitterly: "I suppose other things were more important after I left; and you thought of them. 'Tis the way of girls. There's cousin Priscilla; she is always flitting from one thing to another, forgetting to-morrow what occupied her mind to-day."

"Tell me about your cousin," Edith said, suddenly. "I have heard so much about her. Captain Packer says she is beautiful; he danced with her once, and she captivated him. You must let me see her some day."

This sudden interest in Priscilla was unexplainable; or was it merely the liking of one pretty girl for another? Our conversation was deftly turned toward my cousin; and, when I left, Edith had a fine knowledge of her from my point of view; and that I knew was a flattering one.

I was less buoyant and happy when I departed; my emotions were too complex to explain; so I

walked down by the docks to think of them instead of returning home. Edith was more than I had dared to hope, in voice and looks; but I felt not satisfied with the interview. Why had Captain Packer come in between us to win the confidence that had once belonged to me? I asked that question many times; but there was no answer ready for it. Indeed, I wished not to answer it; 'twas better left so.

XXII.

PRISCILLA FINDS A LOVER.

PRISCILLA, when she learned of Edith's presence in Boston, was anxious to meet her; their mutual desire to see each other brought about an early introduction. Yet I knew from their natures that they would not agree; they would not be even friends of long standing. Yet apparently I was to be disappointed; within a week, so perverse is human nature, they were almost inseparable. Into this friendship was drawn Captain Packer.

In him there was little to distrust or dislike; he was a man to believe in. He was neither boastful nor conceited in his accomplishments; nor unwise in underrating his own qualities. He dispelled prejudice, and drew all honest men (and women, too, I wot not) to him. There was sterling honesty in his make-up; manners of modesty, yet boldness in his ways toward those who were not counted his friends.

Priscilla felt the personality of the man, and our open admiration for him brought pleasure to Edith; that I could divine without doubt. We made a fair quartette together; and as we strolled by the water's edge of an evening Captain Packer would entertain us with stories of his adventures. They were thrilling

with excitement; full of actualities that breathed life and wide experience; they recalled the stories of old Hannah Wooster, woven by the banks of the Connecticut, of her son John. Under the spell of the new temptation, the sluggish blood stirred within me. To the sea I would have to go; to the sea I *would* go!

This much was plain; I knew whither the trend of life was drawing. There was no turning back now; no promises to restrain; no ties to hold. There was one thing to accomplish; that finished, and the sea would be my home.

The consciousness of this drove me to my work with new zeal; the sooner the figurehead was finished now the better. Within a fortnight after Edith's appearance it was nearing completion; and my own plans of a voyage developing. Priscilla had avoided the model-loft; and I worked from memory and inspiration. This absence I did not at first regret; then I conned over in my mind the reason thereof.

But one day all questioning was set at rest; Priscilla walked into the loft, and said: "I did not think I would find you here; but you do not seem very busy."

Removing the short cloak from her shoulders, she continued, seating herself on the edge of the work-bench, "You have not changed the figure-head much since I posed; it looks almost untouched."

"I have chipped off the rough edges, and smoothed out the lines here and there," I answered slowly.

“But you have been down here for days; have you been dreaming?”

There was puzzling expression in her mood; and I gazed at her steadily for reply. She continued, unabashed, and with evident purpose:

“Will you bring the model out nearer the light? I wish to study it more carefully.”

I complied; moving the heavy figurehead nearer the window.

“Now let us look at it together,” Priscilla remarked strangely. “I want to see how well you have caught her expression.”

“What do you mean?” I queried stupidly.

She turned; her cold eyes were eloquent with meaning. “Do not pretend to be stupid, Cousin Allin,” she went on. Then, with averted eyes; “I merely wish to see how well you have caught Edith’s expression. I knew ’twas there the day I first saw it; ’tis stronger than I thought. Her face must have stirred your fancy deeply. ’Tis marvellous; Cousin Allin, it almost makes you a genius.”

I essayed to speak, to protest, to explain, but she waved me to silence and continued:

“Why attempt to deny it? There’s the face; it speaks for itself. It has some resemblance to mine, the same as every pretty face resembles another pretty face, but that is all. The face is Edith’s; the expression is hers. I knew from the beginning you were making another’s face, or some dream face, I knew not which. At one time I thought it might

be mine, idealized as you would have it, but it was not."

When she hesitated (trembling, I thought) I said, agitatedly:

"Cousin Priscilla, it is——"

"Do not explain; I know all you would say," she interrupted, then hesitated, and said slowly: "Let me say one thing before I go: *You're in love with Edith—and always have been!*"

"Priscilla!" I spoke sharply, stepping before her; but she brushed me aside, and added:

"That is all. I must be going."

I stood stunned and mystified, permitting her to go from me in this mood. Then I turned slowly toward the face which had brought forth the remarks.

'Twas fair and bold now, standing out from the block of wood with almost life-like clearness. For all the world the face and figure seemed as real and beautiful as any maiden stepping forth to greet the sea. Flowing tresses and crinkled drapery streamed behind her, falling in graceful ripples to either side. The face was regal in its pose, topping the undulating curves of arms and breast with queenly grace. The expression was more than imperious—'twas pensive and thoughtful; there was almost the touch of gloom in it. Such look had never been Priscilla's; rather defiance and haughtiness rested there.

Had I carved more of Edith than of Priscilla? Was it Edith's face that had haunted my memory all these months and years to color my view of the ideal? Or was it a mere trick of the imagination?

Had not Priscilla been hasty in attributing the expression to one whose face had been forgotten?

I was puzzled—mystified. Yet there was fascination about the face that reminded me of Edith, yet more of Priscilla. The more I studied it the greater became the likeness to Priscilla; 'twas her face idealized. Once she had felt the truth, but now she rejected it. In a moment of passion she had seen only Edith's face, but it was not.

Priscilla! Did I not love her?—even as a drunken man loves his cup; love her with all the passion of soul-strength? Aye, with all the fierceness of curbed emotions suddenly flung loose! And win her I would! I had been a tame lover, waiting on her moods, and wasting love in vain regrets; but now I would woo her with zeal! Her words of scorn could no longer hold me back; they would but fire me to greater ardor.

While still hot with determination, I flung the cape across my shoulders and hurried forth. I would brook no interference; no disappointment would hold me. Once I had dallied with death for her sake, drawn the sword which I had been ill-prepared to handle. And now I tarried while others hung about her with honeyed words.

Down the street I strode, intent upon my mission, eager to meet opposition, taunt or discouragement. All three I met, and parried them.

“Where now, Allin, in such haste?” I heard Martin speak as I brushed past him. “You look like a hare on the chase.”

“Or a drunken man flushed with wine,” added Courtney at his side.

“Neither, gentlemen,” I laughed (I could afford to laugh), “but a man hot after his rights. Later you shall know all.”

I waved them aside, bowed, and strode onward. I passed the street, turned it, and found myself at home. Through the broad halls I went, unheeding all things. Only one thought led me forward.

Where was Priscilla? She was not in the great dining-hall, nor in the banquet-room, nor yet in her own private apartment, where she often dwelt. There I knocked, and waited impatiently for answer. None came, and I roamed about aimlessly. A murmur of voices reached me; I hesitated, gathering the direction from whence they came; then stood silent, uncertain, anxious, trembling.

The voice of the one I was seeking was rich with sweetness and melody, wafted to me on the breeze from the balcony overlooking the vine-screened garden below. Mingled with it were the tones of another, which sounded discordant and made me linger.

Out of the darkness of the hall I strode, with hope still uppermost and determination not yet destroyed; but across the intervening space a maddening picture suddenly drifted. I clutched the railing and waited. From the lighter shadows of the balcony appeared Priscilla's fair face, her lustrous eyes glowing with a light that startled me. Before her, with warmth and passion on flushed cheeks, stood Aaron Burr,

wooing her with an earnestness that made the hand tremble which held hers.

“Fair Priscilla, let wisdom and thought decide you,” he murmured, “not impetuous haste.”

The shadow of the hall concealed me, yet through the semi-darkness I thought the eyes of Priscilla penetrated, for they seemed to seek something back of her ardent wooer. If she saw, there was no recognition—merely blank expression in the glorious eyes. Then they were turned invitingly upon her lover, who, seeing the look, broke forth again:

“Tell me, sweet Priscilla, that my wooing is not in vain—not in vain, Priscilla!”

The fair hand was raised to his lips; he kissed it, and methought their eyes met in mutual love. I could see no more; the mist that came before my eyes blotted out the balcony, the light, the lovers. How I reeled backward and found my way down the broad stairs, I know not. There was nothing clear in my mind; I could think little.

My steps turned naturally to my favorite haunts—the docks and shipping-wharves. Across the bay the western sun was aslant, burnishing the surface with its departing rays. They caught the phantom sails in their golden embrace, and transformed them; then flashed from tapering spar to dangling rigging with magical swiftness. Then all was twilight—misty darkness. The world lost its bloom, and even the sea was cold and steely in its eternal rippling. Night had come, and its shroud concealed the sorrows of a world.

In the twilight I stumbled forward, passing from one dock to another, until weariness crept into the bones ; then I rested in an old deserted shed. On a pile of cordage I flung myself, and sought slumber, which came only in fitful dreams.

From this world of unpleasant dreams I awoke listlessly, feverishly, yet dimly conscious that others were in the shed. A dark-red light flashed its single eye through the blackness ; it searched every nook and corner of the building. Half awake I followed its fascinating lead, and listened to the voices which spoke out of the darkness.

“ We can’t get off on this tide if the capt’n don’t cum soon,” said one. “ ’Tis nearin’ mornin’ now.”

“ He won’t go till he gets his man,” said another ; “ he’s run him down to this, an’ he’ll have him ; saw him cum in this buildin’ myself.”

“ Then why don’t ye find him ? ”

“ Blarst yer head ! Why don’t ye find him yer-self ? ”

There was interruption then ; another entered the building ; and a new light bored its path straight to my resting-place. The voice of Long Jim startled me, as it spoke :

“ There is our man ! Now bring him along ! ”

I started to leap from my couch ; but heavy hands were laid upon me. I flung them off ; but immediately met with others in front. Then we clinched and rolled over in the darkness ; one head struck an iron chain with a sickening thud, and the hand at my throat relaxed. Two more flung themselves upon

me ; and with four uppermost in the conflict I felt the odds going heavily against me. Even then, in the darkness, I might have escaped but for the stunning blow from a bludgeon. When my strength seemed to desert me, Long Jim said sharply : “ Knife him, if necessary ; we must take him, dead or alive ! ”

“ Aye, aye, Capt’n, we’ll tame him without the knife ; that blow settled him. But he’s a strong one—an ox in muscle ! ”

In another moment thongs tied hand and foot ; and like a babe I was lifted and carried away. “ Now, throw him into the boat, and take him aboard ; we must weigh anchor within an hour for this tide.”

I knew then that the sea was to be my home—I was to find it at last, and with it adventures that would haunt me for years.

CHAPTER XXIII.

KIDNAPPED.

MORNING appeared above the horizon in bars of pale light when we were well out of Boston harbor, scudding along before a strong gale. This I knew from the lapping of the waves against the sides of the ship; and from the brisk tramping of feet overhead, followed by commands which rose above the sharp whistling of wind and seething waves. With daylight came better opportunity to inspect my prison-room. That it was foul and loathsome, I guessed from the odors; my eyes now confirmed what my nostrils had betokened. I lay on hard boards, with walls too narrow for two men to turn about with ease; with each roll of ship I was bruised and tumbled about.

A few rays of the morning light penetrated the gloom of the place, showing me the surroundings which had been mine for hours. The light, I judged, filtered from some narrow porthole, passing through a dozen feet of darkness ere it stole hesitatingly between the iron gratings of my prison. Feeble as it was, it brought some relief to the mind: it dispelled the helpless gloom of uncertainty; I was still in a world where the sun rose and set. For hours I lay

there in the lightening gloom, waiting for some one to come ; but it was high noon before human voice greeted me. Then the violent wind had subsided somewhat ; the ship labored less heavily ; and there was more restfulness in the narrow prison.

When the grating overhead was removed, a new flood of light poured down the passageway, bathing all in what seemed dazzling sunshine, reflected from some burnished metal above. There was grateful rest in this change ; and I neglected my visitor to enjoy the sunlight that came with him. But the brutal face thrust into the room now attracted my attention ; it had few lines of mercy or sympathy therein.

“Waal, how d’ye like the guest room?” greeted the man, grinning so that deformities were intensified. Where there should have been an eye, was a horrible cavity ; where the cheek should have rounded out the half-bearded face, was a deep-red furrow that some sword had plowed up with a vicious thrust. “Most people says ’tis ekal to any room in Boston. ’Tis a leetle cramped, but the boards are all soft to lie on, an’ we al’us has fresh air aplenty.”

Then the face grinned at the joke ; a cackle started from somewhere in the depths of the cavernous mouth, and the man shook with mirth.

“Ye ain’t very talkative, I see, this mornin’,” the voice continued, after a silence ; “but ye gentle folks o’ high breedin’ can’t be sociable till ye’ve had yer breakfast. Wall, I have it here, ye can eat it.”

Unlocking the door, he creaked it back on rusty

hinges; then shoving before me some coarse, stale bread, and a dipper of water, he renewed his cackle.

"'Tain't as good as ye have at Carroll's tavern, but 'tis good seafare, an' ye may's well get used to it. Ye'll have enough o' it afore ye see shore agin."

The food, nauseating and repelling, was less interesting to me than the purpose of Long Jim in carrying me off to sea, and our destination. So I spoke for the first time this wise: "Can you tell me where we are going? What's the first port we touch?"

"Ye ain't thinkin' ye'll touch any port fur the next year or two, be ye? We may never go to port to have shore leave, if that's what ye're thinkin' about."

"But the ship will have to touch somewhere to discharge and take on cargo," I argued.

My jailer stared a moment, a leer coming on his face, hideously distorting the ugly scar and eyeless socket; then he answered: "Ye ain't up to the idea yet; ye'll have to cum on deck to get yer weather eye open. The capt'n will give ye some lessons; he must have shipped ye without fillin' out all the papers proper; he does such queer things sometimes."

I asked suddenly, without attending to his meaning: "What name does the ship carry?"

"She was the *Foaming Crest* in Boston; out here she's the *Black Racer*, an' there ain't any craft that can show a pair of heels to her."

A fearful foreboding entered my mind; to confirm

it I continued: "But why do you change her name?"

"Why does we change her name out here?" leered the man. "Ask the capt'n; he don't 'low anuther to tell his tales."

This unsatisfactory answer had to suffice; my jailer took pleasure in leaving me thus puzzled. Alone in the darkness, I cooled my parched tongue with the stale water; but the foul bread I turned from in disgust. Hours later slow starvation brought me back to it; and I nibbled of it. The afternoon came and waned; the approach of night brought no change, nor another sight of my jailer. I slept fitfully through the night, waking occasionally from unpleasant dreams; then grew startled at the unusual noises overhead. With the dawn of a new day came a fierce desire to see sunlight again and breathe pure air.

A glint of light fell aslant the hatchway at about the same hour; and my breakfast, dinner and supper (all served in one) were placed before me;—one huge crust of bread, and a pitcher of water.

"Ye'll have to eat in a hurry this mornin'; the capt'n wants to see ye on deck. Now jes' swallow them chunks of dough quick."

I was more obliging than before; for hunger had made me weak and faint. I was astonished at the appetite that made the last mouldy crust taste sweet; and when it was gone a craving still lingered. My jailer, gloating over the change, said:

"Ye've got yer sea appetite in a hurry. Waal, ye

can thank yer friend Sandy fur that; he knowed ye'd be hungry; so he threw in an extra portion."

"Sandy's your name then?" I answered, repeating it to remember it the better.

"That's my name fur short; but sometimes they call me One-Eyed Sandy. Ye can take yer choice; I ain't grumpy over a name; 'tain't worth while." Then, seeing I was still munching the last piece of crust: "Stow yer breakfast now; an' get out o' here. The capt'n's waitin' fur ye on deck; he's got some-thin' to put ye through."

Sandy helping, I got to my feet; stretched my limbs and aching body. With his further help I climbed wearily the ladder which led heavenward, dragging heavy chains behind me. Above the hatchway, the world of light spread before me; the sea, white-crested with foam and golden with sunlight; the sky blue and speckled with the glorious tints of a cloudless mirror. Sea birds circled over ship and sea, dipping their wings in the flashing waves, and showering the spray in the sun's rays. These signs of life first flashed on the eyes as I stepped on deck.

Then coming nearer, the dirty sides of the ship loomed up; carelessly coiled ropes and rigging; and a dirty, ugly, forbidding crew, congregated near the stern as repelling a crowd as ever sailed from Boston. Their evil faces staring at me brought thoughts of outlandish deeds on the high seas; and my blood ran cold. Ahead, on the main deck, the glint of a long bow-chaser caught my eye; and astern the black muzzle of a Long Tom slanted upward. These

were not signs of a peaceful trader ; nor the crew, which numbered twice the ordinary one for a ship of the *Black Racer's* size. Amidships blackened portholes bore suspicious signs of powder, and tackle arrangements dangled near for handling deck guns.

If the *Black Racer* was a privateer, she was fitted well for her mission ; but neither English nor French flag fluttered from the truck. Not even a blue or white streamer sought the breeze to tell the tale. Glancing skyward to read these signs, I stumbled across a coil of rope, and would have fallen, but Sandy caught me, and with an oath ordered me to approach the captain.

Long Jim stood ready to receive me ; he was apart from his crew, with a few officers of rank near. There was little change in the man ; the eyes wore a more vengeful glitter ; and the brows were contracted. Otherwise, 'twas my first kidnapper, suave, polite, hypocritical. I stood sullenly waiting for him to speak ; not even the wave of his hand brought attention from me. Then he spoke, and I listened :

“ Glad to see ye took to the sea at last, my lad. I always said ye were cut out for it ; said so the first day I clapped eyes on ye. 'Tis a good thing, too ; fine thing for young men ; it makes 'em independent. 'Tis pleasant, too, for 'em that can stand it ; 'tis born in the bones of some ; that's why I urged ye to come an' find out for yerself.”

As I remained quite still, he continued :

“ Seein' we had differences ashore we might settle 'em here. Things don't always go to accommodate

us; not on land nor sea. On such a beautiful day as this we should understand each other. 'Tain't like Boston with its fogs and dirt; they always mix the mind. They stifle me. Poor Bonny was always stupid because he'd stay ashore when he should have been on the sea. You remember Bonny? That was long ago. Poor Bonny! I wish he stood with us to-day; we might sup together, and recall other times. I know he'd be glad to see ye."

Patience exhausted, I asked, finally: "Will you tell me why I am here?—what you intend to do with me?—whither I am going on one of my uncle's ships?"

"Not too many questions at once; it confuses the mind. Let us take 'em in order. Ye wish to know? Well, 'twill come to ye in time. Ye shouldn't be impatient; that's the fault of youth. I s'pose if ye was strung up to the yard-arm, ye'd be anxious to have it over soon; an' I wouldn't; that's the difference between you an' old age. Long Jim is getting along some in years; yesterday he found gray hairs in his head; an' it made him feel old. There's Sandy now, one of my best men—a bull-dog for fighting, an' a good man to trust—he's older'n me by ten years; but he's only got red hairs. Can ye tell me, Sandy, why red hairs never turn gray?"

My erstwhile jailer scowled with his single eye, shook his head violently; then, when the rest of the crew laughed and jeered, he turned upon them fiercely; "I'll kill the likes o' ye dirty curs fur laughin' at a man's hair."

I saw 'twas a sore point with the man; and for a

moment he was furious. Picking up an iron pin he would have hurled it at the jeering mob. But a restraining voice said quietly: "Sandy, that iron is good for better purposes than slayin' one of our men."

The angry jailer dropped the iron, and stood erect; Long Jim continued, addressing me: "Sandy is youthful, too; and he's impatient to get through things in a hurry. He would send his best friends to heaven before their time; some day he'll do it; an' he'll go too."

There was a veiled threat in this; Sandy read it, and was meek. There was absence of discipline in the crew; yet Long Jim had absolute power over the rough element. His orders were not commands; they came in indirect hints; but all understood them. The man lay behind the quiet, impassive face and manners; what he was I dared not guess; something cruel and relentless I knew.

When he once more spoke, I was studying him closely; if he saw it he showed it not. He said: "It grieves me to say what I must; but there's no other way. Yer uncle—a just an' honest man—gave me his consent to take ye to sea, an' show ye the life here."

I blurted out with energy: "That's a lie! You kidnapped me!"

A movement in the crew showed that some would resent this outburst; but Long Jim waved them back, and said: "Ingratitude an' misunderstanding have always been present when we two met; 'tis unfortu-

nate. But I forgive, knowing that ye speak in ignorance. Yer uncle has faith in me; an' he said, 'Long Jim, take the lad to sea, an' make what ye can of him. He's bright an' likely, an' he'll do well what he's put at. He's stubborn; aye, very stubborn, jest as his mother was afore him; but that can be broken. Break it then, jest as far as ye see fit. Take him to sea, and make of him what ye can; I'll stand by ye. That's what he said, my lad, an' that's what I have to do. The responsibility is heavy; but I must bear it. It must be done. My men here will help me."

This was signal for general approval; without other word or sign the men shouted and waved their hands. Mystified at the words and meaning, I continued waiting; but Long Jim enlightened me thus:

"We shall decide whether it be wise fur him to join our numbers or the sharks below. Sandy, ye have been his keeper; now ye can choose further. What shall it be?"

A wolfish leer distorted my jailer's ugly face, and he spoke with evident pleasure: "Give him the plank; 'twill sorter test his nerves, an' give us fun."

"The plank it is then; I had hoped 'twould be the sword; but Sandy has decided. Release him from his chains, and prepare him for the trial."

What cursed trick or joke it all was, I could not guess; but when they dropped the heavy shackles from my feet and arms, I felt the sweetness of freedom. Yet I was not entirely free; cords bound

hand and arms behind. Several sailors, meanwhile, were busy stringing a long plank over the side of the ship, and toward this I was conducted ; but not until after I was blindfolded, and a sack had been drawn over my legs. There was diabolical design in all this, which I now perceived ; and I was prepared for the end.

“Take heed my lad that ye stumble not,” Long Jim said, as I stood by the side of the plank. “If ye stumble, I fear the sharks will feast on ye ; they are hungry, merciless creatures, and they make short work of fresh meat. Walk the plank, and return to us, and we admit ye to the ranks of the *Black Racer’s* crew on probation.”

Turning sullenly toward him, I said : “But what if I do not choose to join your murdering crew ?”

“There is no choice ; ye join us, if ye return. Then we elect the nature of your death later if ye fail us. Proceed cautiously, my lad.”

There was sudden prodding of knives and swords from behind ; and I felt myself forced by a wall of steel across the narrow plank, which ended in death. I hesitated, receiving the sharp pricking of sword points with stoicism ; then I shuffled clumsily and slowly outward, amid the shouts and jeers of the crew. I was well out from the ship, with the plank swaying and bending under my weight, when a dizzy, sickening sensation seized me. I stood over the brink of the sea ; below me floated the hungry sharks ; and every roll and toss of the ship threatened to send me to my doom. The perspiration broke out

on my forehead, and I swayed from side to side like a drunken man.

In that moment of uncertainty, I lived a dozen deaths; then calmness returned to me, and I elected to live. The terror passed from me; my mind became strong and passive. I would yet live to get revenge on the man who had me in his power. I renewed the attempt to walk the plank to the end and return. Cautiously I stepped forward, feeling every inch of the way, but not so carefully that I was not frightened at the sudden termination of my walk. My foot touched the end of the plank; a sickening fear returned to me when I realized how near to death I was. One half inch further, and I would have toppled headforemost into the sea.

Close as the danger was, there was still room for hope; if fair play was given, I could yet reach the ship's side in safety. I turned, slowly, painfully, fearfully; the game was half won, and life was still sweet. With teeth closed firmly, nerves at tension, and muscles drawn, I moved back to greet those who had planned my destruction. Now I was facing them; but through the blindfold I could not see their hideous faces. Was there trickery at last; and was the return journey lengthened out by some horrible device? So it seemed as my leaden steps brought no firm foundation; and the ship still rolled and tossed, bending and swaying the plank into the air. Once I shuddered at the thought of new danger; my foot suddenly failed to touch the plank. In a moment I had lost my balance; vainly I strove to

recover myself, struggling blindly against fate. The sense of plunging through space made the flesh quiver and the nerves to quake. Down through interminable space I sank, with visions of a fearful doom flashing before the mind; then a violent contact with something hard and unyielding; a bruised body and bleeding head, and the harsh jeers and laughter of my tormentors.

XXIV.

THE DUEL AT SEA.

I HAD fallen to the deck—a mere matter of a few feet. The great space I had imagined was short; the time immeasurably infinitesimal that had seemed like eternity. They removed the bandage; and, lying on the deck, a circle of grinning cutthroats leered at me. For this company I had walked the plank; for the pleasure of numbering myself among them I had risked life. As they grinned at me, a horrible hatred of them surged within; a loathing of their very presence pervaded every nerve. I turned away with ill-concealed anger.

Sandy unloosened the bonds that held me; removed the sack from my legs, and said: “Ye ain’t shark’s food yet; an’ I guess ye’ve dis’pointed a good many o’ them.” Then leaning nearer, till his disfigured face brushed mine: “Ye jes’ keep a stiff face, an’ ye’ll be all right yet.”

This was not unkindly meant; but I thought little of it at the time; my mind was awake to other thoughts. Long Jim spoke thus:

“That wasn’t bad plank walkin’; ye can thank Sandy that ’twasn’t the sword test ye had to go through. ’Tain’t many thatcums outo’ that whole.”

The cords and bandages fell from limbs and forehead; and once more I shook myself a free man. The crew hovered around in a circle; before me, within reaching distance, stood my old enemy. A fierce resentment tugged at my heart; old anger was stirred anew; and the desire to punish the man for past villainies obscured all other considerations. Consequences I thought not of; so I plunged forward, and seized Long Jim by the throat. Before crew or friends could interfere, I tossed him heavily against the deck, bones and muscles cracking under the force of the concussion.

"So be it to such villains!" I panted; and then facing the angry crowd, added: "Give me a sword, and I'll fight the whole crew of you; but like cowards you dare not measure blades with me. Kill me then; but your captain I've finished first!"

The bloodless face of Long Jim stared up at the crew; I thought, even as they did, that life was extinct. Then out of the mob rushed a burly form, a horrible bull-like roar in his throat. He sought to run me through, I judged, but instead he shoved a weapon into my hands.

"Here, take it! Ye'll have need of it. Then defend yerself till I cut ye in two."

Drawing another sword from his belt, he clashed it against mine, giving me fair time to recover. I breathed hard, grasped the proffered weapon; and replied:

"Let the best man win!"

The heavy blades crossed, flashed brightly in

the sunlight and parried blow for blow. Then I knew I had no mean swordsman to fight; but his arm was better adapted to cutlass or battle-ax than fencing sword. His blows were the slashings of a battering-ram—heavy, vindictive and irresistible. He sought to break down my guard by sheer weight; with one blow he might sever sword and body in twain.

But Aaron Burr had been no unskilled teacher; he had taught me how to hold strength, and how to tire with science and skill. So I held my fierce antagonist back, parrying his blows and showing equal strength in driving. He drew back, astonished at the blade that did not yield to his blows; then the brutal face reddened and turned black with anger. The crew had formed a circle for a speedy termination of the fight; but now the combat was to lengthen out, and their love for a fight made them forget the cause of the conflict. I saw that some in the crowd had no love for my enemy; and his defeat, I took it, would cause no sorrow among them.

I was fighting one of their best swordsmen; the bully of the crowd, the one of bull-dog pluck. Yet now he was outclassed; some read that in the flashing of the blades; I felt it in the feverish energy of the arm that tried to press me back. Back and forth across the deck we moved, widening and narrowing the circle; stumbling over coiled ropes and stanchions, and avoiding pitfalls only by dexterous twists and turns. Back one was pressed, then the other, till escape seemed impossible. But the battle raged.

Ten minutes and more the steel clanked and crashed, hissing and screaming through the air, cutting and slashing, but never once reaching the throat that it sought. The air seemed to grow red and stifling; a hot band clutched the throat; the circle of faces around appeared vague and shadowy. Then up from the sunlight's path gleamed the cruel weapons, raining blows now that seemed irresistible with a swiftness that deceived the eye. The furious onslaught was past human endurance; it came like a hurricane out of the sea. I summoned all my strength for the final encounter, fought with redoubled fury, and shoved the giant slowly toward the side of the ship. This time he would not escape me; no mistake; no weakening of arm or energy; no mercy. I held him steadily toward the course, pushing him to his fate; he saw it and ventured to shift sideways. But the sword's point was at his throat; he desisted with a shudder and retreated. Now his foot was within a yard of the bulwark of the ship; now it touched it; further retreat was impossible.

Here the last stand was to be made; here life would have to yield to one. The swords flashed crimson in the sunlight, then grew cold and silvery. Once they clashed in mid-air squarely, quivered and sobbed like the shriek of a sea-bird, then fell and turned and twisted again. Stunned by the shock of the blow, the arm of my adversary grew clumsy and slow; before it could regain its cunning, I had won the conflict. An up-thrust pinned the sword-arm firmly to the side of the ship, cutting through

muscle and tissue and burying the point straight into the wooden railing. There it stuck, holding the giant a helpless prisoner, while the blood spurted across the white deck.

“Yield and life shall be yours !” cried I hoarsely, unwilling yet to kill in cold blood. “I have no quarrel with you ; I do not seek your life.”

The turgid eyes glared at me ; they expected no mercy ; but now the game was clearly against him and life was yet sweet. In sullen anger he growled :

“I yield !”

Even then I did not apprehend my full victory ; I knew not that Grizzly Mike had long aspired to the leadership of the crew, and that he had sought over the corpse of Long Jim to establish his right to the position. Now I had won his implacable hatred ; for in conquering I had abased and mortified the bully in him. The others smiled at the victory ; and some faintly cheered, such is the respect for courage even among criminals.

’Twas Sandy who stepped forward and said : “Ye ain’t afraid of swingin’ a sword ; an’ ye know how ter do it.” Then in a lower voice : “I’m glad ye held up Grizzly Mike ; he’d been bossin’ the crew in a minute ; but ye should have killed him—run him through. He’ll kill ye yet, if the capt’n don’t ; he ain’t dead—just stunned. I’ll have ter bind ye again till I get further orders.”

“You can bind me, Sandy ; and do what you will with me,” I answered, wearily, tired of the battle and resistance.

“That’s the way ter win our hearts. We ain’t goin’ ter see ye murdered in cold blood after this; ’tain’t our way. Ye’ve knocked down the capt’n, an’ held up our best swordsmen; that’ll give ye fair play fur yer life.”

I flung the sword down, held out my arms to Sandy and submitted quietly. The crew watched me, and this action won more of their regard. Sandy’s eyes had admiration in them as he led me away; I knew that I had favored him.

Back in the ill-smelling, odor-reeking cell I rested from my exertions, too tired at first to think or care of the future. Mere animal rest sufficed; that was pleasure enough for a while. Thus I slept through the night; but on the morrow new anticipation came. An ominous silence reigned on deck; ’twas as though a lull was brooding before a storm.

Sandy fed and watered me as before, bringing my meals in bucketsful to last for the day. But he had little satisfaction to give me. To my inquiries about Long Jim he always made short answer: “He’s comin’ roun’ slowly; ’twas a mighty hard knock ye gave him; it nearly killed him.”

As the days and nights passed, I contented myself in speculating as to the future; for the present I was safe, but punishment would come in time. That I doubted not, nor had any misgivings as to its severity.

Tortures might be in store for me that I had never heard of; Long Jim, I knew, was fertile in resources of this kind.

Sandy, ’tis true, showed more leniency toward me;

and, in truth, added to the quality and quantity of my food. But whether that was of his choice, to express his admiration for me, or the results of new orders, I could not judge. I enjoyed the greater liberality of my host and sought to engage my jailer in conversation; but Sandy was short and taciturn. He was an ideal jailer.

The days now passed, one much like another; the nights brought no change other than darkness—and sleep. The atmosphere below decks grew in thickness and temperature, informing me that we were approaching a warmer clime. The port-holes were thrown open for comfort; but even these added little to it. The breezes scarcely stirred through the foul air of the ship; and the few that dared to enter were laden with stifling heat. Mid-day brought the temperature to the boiling point; and then the afternoon was marked by the gradual cooling off. The prison grew insufferable; and one day I ventured to speak, saying: “Sandy, the air is stifling down here, and ’tis killing me. Can’t you take me on deck for a change?”

He replied, mopping the perspiration from his face: “There ain’t much air up there either; the pitch’s runnin’ from the seams, an’ the decks blister yer feet like’s if they were red-hot irons.”

“Are we in the tropics?” I persisted.

“No, we’re abreast of Cuba; we’ll be at headquarters in a day or two.”

“Where is that? On the Island of Cuba?”

He made no answer, but shook the dust from his

shaggy beard, and mopped the perspiration anew. We never renewed the conversation; Sandy from preference, and I from a sense of hopelessness. But the following day relief came, my jailer entered the prison-room with more cheerfulness.

“Get yerself tergether, an’ come on deck; ye can have yer fresh air now; ’twill do ye good.”

I knew that something unusual was brewing; though impatient to breathe pure air again, I was laggard in my attempts to get ready. What new punishment now awaited me? When ready, Sandy led up the ladder, and I followed. The sun spent its rays in the darkest nooks of the companionway, and seemed to warm and saturate the place with its tropic heat.

When on deck the scene changed and dazzled; for a full minute the eyes were blinded; the sea no longer held the horizon within its embrace. Instead on three sides wooded shores, green with vegetation, outlined the world, shutting out sea and sky; and on the fourth the blue ribbon of the ocean stretched in limitless range. White sand bordered the cove in which the ship had anchored, and its edge was dotted with black specks; men idly grouped about casks and barrels, boats drawn upon the beach and laden with cargo. The waters of the cove floated a motley collection of boats, big and little; two full-rigged ships besides the *Black Racer*; and a score of smaller craft. The waters and beach were alive with activity, men and boats coming and going.

Up from the beach sloped wooded hills to gray

summits that faded in cloudy mists ; vines, flowers and trees filling the air with the sweet fragrance of nature. Soft breezes, wafted from the shore, intoxicated senses with the spices and fragrance of tropical plants. There was enchantment in the scene after the misery of confinement in the gloomy prison ; even the blue and purple of the clouds had a softer tint than usual, and the gray and green of water and woods pleased the eye beyond expression. Long-legged birds, with necks outstretched, flew heavily across the cove, marking their flight with soft flapping of wings. For a long time I watched the scene ; gazed at woods and hills ; followed the curving beach ; studied the ships and boats floating on the basin of blue water ; and thought of it all as an enchantment to dazzle the senses. Then my eyes came back to the ship ; to the men on it ; to Sandy, my jailer ; and to Long Jim, my relentless enemy. He stood near, with no sign of our recent conflict visible on his face ; with Grizzly Mike by his side, scowling and waiting orders. There was no resentment in the voice, as he said, addressing me :

“ Pleasant view after a few days below. Some people don’t like it ; that’s because the sea hasn’t agreed with ’em ; when a man’s sick he sees beauty in nothing. Now this harbor is prettier than Boston ; an’ it’s better fur your health.”

“ Better for your health,” I rejoined, uncompromisingly ; “ for when you return to Boston, a halter will hang around your neck.”

“ Ye don’t understand Long Jim when ye say that ;

he'll never return to Boston except as a captain, with his good ship under him. He won't be caught nappin'; there's our friend Bonny; he may be caught some day. He hasn't followed the sea to find wisdom. Poor Bonny! I've warned him, but he persists in throwin' his life away."

I interrupted hastily: "Is this the pirates' headquarters?"

"This is my little home—my kingdom. Up yonder is my fortress and castle; down there my men an' their homes."

'Twas a home and kingdom not to be ashamed of; for never did landscape seem brighter, nor tropical wealth more abundant. The men of the kingdom were a motley crowd; and they were busy unloading boxes and bales that revealed the wealth of many a noble ship. There were barrels and casks that contained plenty of rum; and some had been imbibing too freely of their contents. They were men of all colors and nationalities—the scum and outlaws of two continents. There were deserters from warships; outlawed privateersmen; murderers and cut-throats from Malay to Spain. They wore picturesque garbs of every conceivable cut and fashion; some adorned with silken coats and robes of Spanish grandees; others clothed in coarse, dirty leathern dress slashed at waist and shoulders with silk and woven gold. Rings and chains adorned in barbaric fashion swarthy chests and fingers, dangling pendant from slashed ears, and caught up in loops about necks and arms. Picturesque, though coarse and brutal, they

were in fine incongruity with the beauty of the tropical setting.

A boat hove up to the ship's side; a dozen oars sprung into position; and Sandy spoke thus to me: "Here's the cap'n's boat; an' ye're to go in it."

Following his lead, I scrambled over the side of the *Black Racer*, bidding a quiet farewell to my prison ship; but what I was exchanging it for I knew not. It could not be, I thought, much worse; yet little did I know.

Long Jim followed, seating himself in the stern, and directing the men in their work. We shot across the blue expanse of water, and a nearer view of the pebbly beach and wooded shore impressed me. The wealth and splendor of merchandise and treasures strewn in heaps on the shore added to the effect of the place. Amidst them all reeled drunken pirates, begging for more rum, offering jewels of priceless value for a drink; stalwart sailors clad in tattered garments, with diamond rings pendant from ears, and costly silken sashes dragging in the dirt and water as they sought to moor their boats.

Strange scenes of contrast multiplied; as we proceeded up the beach the barbarians eyed us with wonder, then returned to their work or pleasure. With all their wealth of stolen treasures, there was no happiness, nor content written on their faces; not even the animal in them seemed satisfied.

A hundred feet from the water's edge, we ascended the slope, passing through groves of tropical trees, rich with fruit and blossoms. At the summit of the

slope we emerged from the bower of trees and vines ; the entrance to a heavy, squat stone building opened before us. Vines and trees concealed the massive stone walls, and from the bay the two blended into each other without sign of demarcation. The damp of ages had already collected on the stone ; and the moss of the tropics had softened its harsh outlines. 'Twas a fortress, whose interior might be gloomy beyond compare ; but it was a mission in whose quietness many a prayer had been uttered. What life and tragedy its walls concealed no man could judge !

Opposite the cove, the verdant hill opened into a valley, sloping downward, forming a picture of surpassing loveliness. I stood a moment to gaze at it ; even my relentless companions lingered a moment to respect my feelings. Then under a stone archway we strode, shutting out the world of sunlight and beauty ; the brief respite was over, and the reality of prison life once more obscured other thoughts.

Through the vaulted chamber of rough-hewn stone our footsteps echoed dismally ; then we approached time-worn steps, which led downward through long winding corridors whose gloom was heavy with a damp and sticky atmosphere. There was no light in this hole ; and Sandy struck a feeble torch. Another series of rough-hewn steps carried us still further downward ; and the air grew fouler, heavier with moisture and suffocating odors. Suddenly my heart grew sad and heavy ; the instinct of the hunted animal crept into my mind ; I glared at the form of

Sandy ahead. With one spring I could overpower him, and then escape; I could at least purchase my freedom for a brief space. But the desire to kill passed away, and the remembrance of it made me speak thus: "Sandy, I could have killed you a dozen times ere this; had you no fear?"

For reply he started around nervously, clutching a knife at his belt. I smiled at the action, saying: "That's not necessary now; I would not warn you if I intended to kill."

"No, no; but 'tis a devilish hole; an' more'n one man has gone crazy here."

"Then that's what you expect of me."

"The capt'n's testin' ye," he added, off guard; "he'll keep ye here till he's satisfied; then he'll take ye up."

"Then I have another chance to see daylight again."

"I dunno; I only obeys orders," sullenly answered my jailer, relapsing into his former non-committal attitude.

I continued, wishing to break the gloom by the sound of my own voice: "Long Jim wants to punish me, but not to kill me. I wonder at it."

We approached the lowest part of the subterranean prison; the trickling of water caught my ear. "Is there a spring here?" I asked.

"'Tis the water from the rocks; it drips through the wall, and falls into the pool below. There's the pool! See it! We call it the Suicide's Pool; when prisoners get tired of living they jump into it."

He laughed harshly ; but there was more fear than happiness in the ring of it.

“ Then you fish them up, and give them Christian burial ? ” I asked.

For reply, Sandy whispered hoarsely ; “ No, we can never find the bodies ; they go to—— ”

“ Where ? ” I asked, he hesitating. “ I dunno ; nor nobody else ! ” was all he could reply.

The torch reflected its light on the stagnant surface of the water ; 'twas slimy and greenish, and reeking with fantastic forms of vapory figures, which rose ghostlike to the arched rocks above. 'Twas not a place to soothe the nerves or mind ; yet 'twas to be my abiding place for an indefinite period ; I shuddered a little at this ; and the instinct of the hunted animal came back.

On one side of the pool a rough-hewn stone archway opened into a circular room ; on the floor of this was spread some moldy, damp leaves ; a bench and rude wooden table added further to the comfort of the prison. Behind me a double iron door closed the passageway to the subterranean tunnel. A few yards of uneven flooring ; the dark treacherous pool of water ; and the circular room ;—these were the precincts of my prison home. Semi-gloom pervaded the whole region ; and when Sandy's torch was extinguished the light was that of early evening, with only the flash of the surface of the water to suggest the possibility of light in the world.

Disheartened by the surroundings, and still uncer-

tain of action, I said suddenly to my jailer: "Sandy, do you come here every day to feed me?"

"No," was the reply; "no one is allowed down here."

"Then you intend to starve me to death?"

"No; yer food an' water'll cum from above; there's an opening in your room to the roof above; they let down the food in a bucket."

"What ingenious deviltry!" I blurted out. "A rat in a hole!"

By the aid of the torch I could see that my circular room had no roof; but that it opened a hundred feet into the air above me. I was at the bottom of a great well; the walls were steep and slippery. No man could scale them. 'Twas a splendid trap for hurling down those whose destruction was desired.

"I might be dead a month here, then, before any one would discover it," I muttered bitterly, thinking of the possibility of escape.

"Not if ye're hungry," answered Sandy, shrewdly; "ye'll have ter take yer food out o' the bucket; an' then we know ye're not dead."

"But a raving maniac, I might be." Sandy shrugged his shoulders; I continued: "Will you send the food to me, or will somebody else attend to my few wants?"

"The capt'n's made me yer jailer; an' so long's he's o' the same mind, I'll feed ye."

"Then, Sandy"—and my voice was imploring—"I want you to send me down a few green leaves

and flowers once in a while to make me think of the world above. Will you do it?"

He looked suspiciously at me; then answered: "Yes, I'll do it." Had he answered otherwise, I should have sprung upon him, and flung him into the Suicide's Pool.

XXV.

THE SUICIDE'S POOL.

WHEN Sandy left, I was alone in the gruesome prison ; scarcely had the iron door clanked behind him than a species of terror seized me. I regretted then that I had not chosen another course ; I started after him ; but his echoing steps had already died out in the distant corridor. A trembling, partly of weakness and partly of terror, made me weak ; and I sank upon the rocks. My voice almost faltered aloud a prayer ; but the echo of it calmed me. I knew that I would go mad, if weakness like this grew unchecked ; so I sat upon a stone near the pool, and buried my head in my hands. Long and patiently I waited for strength ; shutting out the sight of my surroundings until I knew I could face them resolutely.

In this condition I tried to live in the past ; recalling memories that were dear to me, full of sunlight and happiness. Priscilla's face stood boldly before me ; and for a full hour I gazed at the vision, finding balm and encouragement in it. My last glimpse of her still haunted me ; yet withal I loved and found no fault with her.

When a new spirit of resolution strengthened me, I studied my surroundings with more interest ; there

might still be a possibility of escape. But the days of gloom and depression that followed brought no relief; no opportunity to change the monotony of the imprisonment. Inactivity was dangerous; and madness would seize me if I did not employ the mind. Once I was drawn by an irresistible fascination to the brink of the terrible pool; its sparkle charmed the eyes; its trickle sounded like music to the ears. Then I laid my head closer to it, resting it on the rocks; closer and closer I drew to its slimy surface, green now with the emerald tint of priceless stones. Below a ray of light beamed up, forming a path like a bar of sunshine; then it beckoned like a falling star; and I wished to follow it. In the liquid depths of the pool it formed into fantastic shape; then marked the outlines of a human face. 'Twas that of Priscilla.

In another moment I would have plunged into the pool—and to my doom. I shuddered at the thought, and turned from the brink, groaning with anguish. It had been so subtle and fascinating that my mind had hardly grasped it all. Now I realized the horror of the situation!

After that I shunned the pool; passing it often with wild eyes and fearful step; dreading inwardly the return of the fascination. Activity, I knew, was my only hope, and to that I turned eagerly, feverishly, hopefully. I would appoint a task that my hands and brain could perform, and in the doing I would forever blot out the pool that had drawn so many to their death. With the loose stones that

had been hewn from the rocks, I would build a wall that would forever shut out the pool from the prison. This might take weeks and months ; but even years might count as days in the future.

No laborer in prison ever worked harder than I at the self-appointed task ; day and night I worked (for the measure of time was no longer possible), and hands and limbs grew tired and worn under the burden. The wall reared itself slowly, and in its growth I found a new exultation that I could not comprehend.

From the monotony of life in the subterranean prison, Sandy occasionally brought relief in a few spoken words ; sending down with my food a word of cheer, and a few flowering plants from the world above. At times the life pressed heavily upon my spirits, and an infinite longing to escape filled mind and soul. To-day, to-morrow, the next day, I hoped some release would come ; some new punishment would be meted out to me that would fall swift and sure ; death even was preferable to lingering in such gloomy solitude.

The dampness of the place entered the very marrow of the bones, and the body became racked with pain and soreness ; then fever followed, and I raved in delirium. There was little chance of recovery, and my mind wandered till my ravings startled Sandy in his ministrations from above. Night and day I tossed on the rotting leaves, foolishly cursing in my ravings the fate that had brought me to that end.

How the fever left me, and new consciousness

dawned again, I know not; I simply awoke one time from my delirium, and saw life as it was, and not as in a dream. But strength came back to body and limbs slowly, grudgingly. Pain racked and distorted every part long after the fever subsided; 'twas mental and bodily suffering that hemmed in life as in some hideous nightmare. It seemed as if human endurance could not long stand the strain, and despair might set in with its train of evils.

Eight months of imprisonment hardened mind and body; but there was still hope, despite sufferings. Sandy in time ceased to minister to my few wants, and another jailer took his place with grudging hatred. There were no longer the little attentions that had lightened the burden of existence, but rather the harshness of a brutal devil, who cursed me daily for persisting in living. I was a burden to him; a daily care that he would rid himself of. If I would end all in suicide, he would lend his assistance—send me down a knife with which to cut my throat. This proposition I accepted; and the knife was hurled forthwith down the shaft. It rattled upon the stones, rebounded, and then fell into my hands—a convenient weapon for future use. Then when I refused to use it upon myself, the man sought to starve me out; but I had collected food sufficient for days, and at the end of a week he returned to his work more sullen and angry than ever.

After that the apathy of mind made existence easier; I no longer thought or planned; I accepted the situation with the calmness of an old man.

From this stupor, the voice of Sandy one day aroused me; 'twas like the cry from another world. In a few jerky sentences, he told me all; related the adventures of a new cruise in the *Black Racer*; and added, in sweet conclusion:

"The capt'n's ordered ye up ter-morrow. Don't show yer spite against him; an' ye'll have another chance."

I would not. I would bide my time now; that was better than foolish boldness. Sleep did not come to me that night; I tossed about on my foul bed, and paced the prison back and forth till the rattling of chains at the entrance to the gallery shot through my brain like a cannon ball. Release at last; sunshine and light once more! I hurried to the iron door, and by the light of the torch he carried, I greeted Sandy as a friend. He brought my breakfast, but I spurned it, saying, "I'm too eager to see daylight again; I want no bread and water."

"Ye've been here eight months," Sandy said slowly; and there was pity in his voice.

"Yes, eight months," I replied bitterly; "eight months of hell! Aye, aye, eight months of hell!"

We started up the series of winding stairs, my guard leading the way, and I following his flickering torch, tremblingly and eagerly. I was anxious to reach the upper world once more. We entered the main corridor; passed through it, and began the ascension of the last steps. The sunlight now began to stream ahead in bars of pale light. I gasped as I saw it, and pushed my guide forward more rapidly.

With ever increasing intensity it streamed down the corridor till it seemed to dazzle the eyes. Suddenly I stopped, gasping and groping blindly around.

"Sandy, where has the light gone? What did you do? Speak!"

There was desperation in my voice, for I felt that some trick had cheated me of my rights again.

"There's light enough here," he growled, turning suspiciously upon me; "more'n ye ever had in that hole."

"But I tell you it has gone—gone, Sandy," and my voice rose almost to a shriek. "I cannot see the light; a moment ago I could; but now—now—my God!—have I gone blind? Tell me quick! Have I gone blind?"

I could not see; but I knew instinctively that he stepped back, and his voice betrayed his fears.

"How can I tell? I ain't got yer eyes?"

I demanded fiercely, stretching out a hand to grasp my guard; "Did man ever come out of that prison with his eyesight? Did you know that was to be my punishment?"

Had I clutched him, I would have held him in a vise; in my madness I may have crushed him to death. The truth was dawning fearfully upon my brain. Eight months in the darkness had weakened the eyes so that the flood of light had been too much for them; now I was totally blind. I could not see the torch, the sunlight, nor my own hands. I staggered, and would have fallen, but in his pity Sandy supported me.

"This is to be my punishment, my God!" I groaned. Then in fierce resentment, I shouted, "But I shall live to destroy the man who caused it! God give me strength!"

Even Sandy trembled at this supplication, so intense was it. But I was immediately calm, for I saw the wisdom of patience.

"Sandy, you must lead me now; I am totally blind; I can never see the sunshine again. Take me where you will, back to the prison or to your captain; it matters not which."

He spoke consolingly, unwilling yet to believe in the hopelessness of my case. "Ye'll be able to see when yer eyes are stronger; 'tis comin' from that dark hole to the light so suddenly."

"No, no; I fear not! Are not my eyes open and staring at you?"

"Yes; an' ye must be able to see." He was incredulous, I knew; but I shook my head solemnly, and said; "'Tis hopeless, then—hopeless! Blind! Blind! BLIND!"

'Twas with difficulty I suppressed a shriek, despair was on my lips and in my heart. Yet I suppressed it that I might the better bide my time.

With heavy steps we proceeded, I following Sandy now as helpless as a child. There was no further interest in my surroundings; all the world was black to me; the darkened corridor as dim as the prison I had just left. Not even the sunshine and plants would have attraction; the world was dead to me.

When we reached the entrance, the warm sun

bathed head and face in its glow ; the sweet fragrance of nature filled nostrils ; but otherwise there was no change from the gloom of the subterranean hole. I stood a moment, breathing in the change and thinking of what might have been the case. Then suddenly I spoke, asking :

“Sandy, have I turned gray ? Is my hair white ?”

“Not white, but touched with gray.”

“I thought so ; I’m old and blind before youth has left me. Surely Long Jim has his revenge. Take me to him now ; he can gloat over his work. I will then curse him to his face.”

No reply to this vehement speech followed, but I knew that ’twas received with disfavor. Indeed, I regretted it a moment later, and murmured softly : “Patience ! Patience. My time will come.”

We crossed the courtyard ; ascended more steps ; and passed under the cool roof of a wide portico. The stone pavements echoed to our tread ; birds warbled and trilled under the eaves till their voices filled the air with strains of song.

We were standing now ; a new instinct seemed to dawn upon me ; and I judged we stood in a room in the presence of others. This discernment seemed a part of another nature—the birth of a new faculty that I could not define. How many stood within the room, I knew not ; yet their presence was manifest to me. I waited patiently, standing where we had halted ; a long pause followed. Then when Long Jim’s voice broke the stillness I was not surprised.

"Ye have stood the test well, my lad ; I al'us knew ye had grit in ye ; just the kind for our work. Now yer probation is over, an' we'll make amends fur it all. One of our number has left us—lost his life at sea—an' was dropped overboard. Once Grizzly Mike was at yer mercy ; now he's past all mercy."

He paused, weighing his words well, and, I thought, peered keenly into my sightless eyes. He continued: "Fur savin' Grizzly Mike, an' fur overcoming him in battle, we've decided to give ye his place. He was my first lieutenant ; he would have been that now had he not been too eager to be captain ; fur that he lost his life. Long Jim makes ye his first lieutenant ; but take warning from Grizzly Mike's fate. Don't try to take my place, or we'll feed ye to the sharks."

I answered bitterly ; "There is little chance of that ; I'm blind ; you've robbed me of what is dearer than life. If I were not blind, I would send you where you sent Grizzly Mike ; but now I'm helpless ; a child could laugh at me."

There was a long pause ; then Long Jim's words were addressed to my guard : "What does he mean, Sandy ? Has the poison of the Suicide's Pool entered his head ? Is he crazy ?"

"He says he's blind," Sandy answered shortly ; "I know not ; it may be the light blinded him fur a time."

"Would to God that it was no worse," I murmured.

I could not convince them ; they tried various methods to make me blink, and then accepted the

situation doubtfully. Yet, in words, at least, Long Jim appeared satisfied, and said :

“ This misfortune shall not rob ye of yer rights ; a blind lieutenant may be better than one with too many eyes. Not seein’ is a virtue sometimes ; it saves us lots of trouble an’ sorrow. The men will know how to obey ye ; an’ if they don’t they’ll suffer. Sandy, issue the orders to the men ! ”

XXVI.

STARTLING NEWS BROUGHT TO THE PIRATES' ISLAND.

THERE was something ironical in the new position and title that my enemy had bestowed upon me ; 'twas a farce that had little mirth in it for me. I thought little of it, and in the sorrow of my new bereavement dismissed it from mind. But Sandy was eager to explain ; to take, in fact, orders from me. I had now passed my second test of courage and endurance, and I was in good standing until some overt act on my part stripped me of the honors again.

Why Long Jim had selected me as Grizzly Mike's successor, I saw not ; yet I doubted not that some good reason could be given. There were those dissatisfied with his leadership ; and only the time and opportunity were needed to break his power in favor of another. A change of sentiment in such a turbulent, violent crew was merely a matter of slight importance ; it might come any day unannounced. I was without following of any kind ; but my courage had been proven to the crew ; and none would dare to cross swords with me after Grizzly Mike's discomfiture. Therefore, my selection as first lieutenant

had some of the craftiness of the wise serpent in it. In an emergency I might be offered up as a sacrifice to appease the anger of the crowd; life's tenure was never sure among such brutes.

Long Jim held sway over the pirates by virtue of his craftiness and mental power; he was no fighter, but a leader, a schemer, and a man of parts. His was the secret power which none could measure. 'Twas the domination of mind over matter. Any one of the two hundred pirates could have smote him to the earth, and none would have regretted his death; yet none dared to raise a finger against him. All had felt his gloved hand of iron, sweeping everything ruthlessly before it when raised against his desires. For springing into the breach to assume control of the crew, Grizzly Mike, I doubted not, had been quietly murdered. Of his death I could learn nothing more; but Long Jim held the secret.

After my appointment I was in a measure the master of my own movements; I was no longer a prisoner, except as nature had made me; but release even from that was promised in time. Glimmerings of returning light made glad and joyous the heart, and the dark world slowly returned. Then I knew that sight was not forever taken from me, and that the injury to the eyes was merely temporary. At first I could only enjoy nature by inhaling the pure air, and breathing in the fragrance of the flowers and plants; but soon the world of colors opened a new charm which seemed never so great. 'Twas as though another sense had been given to me—a new power to

appreciate the world. But of this returning sight I said nothing to Sandy nor Long Jim; 'twas well to let them think still that I was blind. So day after day I strolled through the gardens or down by the beach, breathing in the new life of colors and pleasure which had been returned to me. The world was ideal and attractive in its pristine beauty, and cliffs and hills were verdant in their summer leafage. Even the scarred rocks and wave-beaten shore were bright with colors that long held the eye.

In the natural order of things my position was nominally one of power; and in the event of Long Jim's death I would succeed him as leader. That, I knew, would be contested by ambitious aspirants. Strong and subtle as I had proved with the sword, there was in me none of the power which made Long Jim feared and respected. There would be plenty to spring at my throat to destroy before the last breath had left the body of their captain. Had my sword not penned Grizzly Mike to the side of the ship on that fateful day of my fight, Long Jim would never have recovered from the blow I had dealt him. By fair or foul means, he would have been disposed of by the only man who had dared to make the bid for leadership. Had I done wisely or not in overcoming Grizzly Mike?

Sandy now could talk more freely with me; I was not a prisoner, and was entitled to some of the secrets of the place and crews. My companion proved ready with his information; and the situation was soon grasped by me.

"Who would have been chosen had I not been here?" asked I one day, when Sandy stood by me.

"Silver Dick, or Dunkers, the Frenchman," was the slow reply.

"Then I may count them as my two worst foes?"

There was a silence; but Sandy answered truthfully: "They'd both cut yer throat the first chance they had, but they won't do it."

"Why not? Are they afraid of Long Jim?"

"Yes, but they're more afraid of each other. They won't lay hands onto ye till one of 'em is out of the way. If ye waz killed, they'd have to fight it out between 'em, an' then, likely's not, the capt'n would have the other killed for murderin' a comrade. Killin' anuther is against the rule; an' the capt'n uses it when he wants to. There ain't no danger to ye unless——"

"Unless what?" asked I, he hesitating.

"I waz thinkin' of how one of 'em—Silver Dick or Dunkers—might get killed at sea. Then yer life wouldn't be wurth nothin'. Ye'd wake up the next mornin' after the crew landed to find yer throat cut, an' Silver Dick or Dunkers would ask fur yer place. Then the capt'n would have to give in."

"And the men would support Silver Dick or Dunkers?"

"Yes, 'tis the rule; an' the capt'n don't dare go back on that."

"Then I'm safe until one of these two rivals is out of the way?"

"Yes, safe as the capt'n is."

If there was honor among the pirates, 'twas fear that inspired it ; both Long Jim's fate and mine hung by slender threads, which any day might be snapped. My fate was wrapped up in that of my worst enemy ; to kill him was to bring destruction upon my own head.

I had many occasions to witness the unruly, stubborn nature of the pirate company ; small things arousing their wrath, which nothing but bloodshed could appease. Then they were calmed like wilful children receiving new playthings. None knew better than Long Jim how to quiet them ; when to defy and when to humor them ; how to lead them to think as he wished, controlling their anger and passions by subtle powers that baffled his worst enemies. Neither Silver Dick nor Dunkers possessed a tithe of this strange man's hold upon the men ; and the leadership that they might acquire would soon prove their death. Not one could long sway such strange collections of humanity, and keep them from each other's throats.

I was daily associating with the pirates, and their conversation furnished me with food for thought. They boasted of the treasures they had stolen, of the good ships they had scuttled, of the passengers and crews they had sent to the bottom of the seas. Horrible tales of cruelty tripped from their tongues with little thought of their meaning ; fiendish crimes were related with unblushing cheek and unfaltering voice ; and chuckling grins and laughs accompanied stories that would harden the conscience and life of the

most brutal. Cruises in distant waters where gold-laden galleons were met and captured; tragic scenes on the lonely sands of some strip of beach where they would bury their treasures, and wild chases and conflicts with privateersmen and war ships sent out to convoy the merchantmen;—these formed the subject of many a mirthful tale, told between drunken bouts that made night hideous at times. They had neither love nor respect for honor or nationality. They fought all nations alike; they were a breed by themselves—compounded of many races and beliefs. Not one boasted of country or relatives; nor hoped for any reward beyond that which their murderous life yielded.

There was always a ship in the bay, with one or more coming or going most of the time. They scoured the high seas after prizes, and in some mysterious way learned of the coming and going of valuable ships. When the *Bounty* or *Venturesome* was to leave Boston harbor, they were apprised of the fact; and her cargo of merchandise was tallied off; or when Spanish ships left Europe, laden with rich cargoes, Long Jim knew of their destination. Some mysterious agent kept the pirates well informed of the commerce of the world, and many were the prizes that fell afoul of the bloody demons of the island.

Returning ships with their prize money and cargo were signals for new scenes of wild carnival. Carousal and debauch filled the air for a night and day; the pirates became drunken beasts, even threatening their own peace and security. Blood flowed freely;

duels with swords and pistols decimated their numbers; and not even Long Jim dared interfere with the wild revelry. He was too shrewd to venture down from his fortress on the hill to anger the brutes by any suggestion of command. 'Twas their one right, which brooked no interference. For a day and night they celebrated their victory unrestrained and undisciplined.

The maddest and most evil passions were given unbridled liberty on the beach below; and each exerted himself to outclass all others in making the scenes diabolically repulsive. Not until exhausted passion had overcome all powers would they cease their lust for deviltry. Then, one by one, yielding to the influence of liquor, they would sleep where they stood, leaving gradually the world to the peace and calmness of nature. The strange contrast brought the birds back to the beaches from their frightened haunts; but with voiceless flight they hovered over the brooding slumber of the drink-deadened pirates, fearing lest at any moment they might awaken to the wild revelry of the night.

The return of one of these successful expeditions brought momentous change to my life. Long Jim had gone forth with a valiant crew in the *Black Racer*; 'twas something more than ordinary when he ventured forth—an extra treasure-laden ship, or a war vessel to encounter before the prize could be captured. None knew the nature of the prize till the *Black Racer* returned to the retreat. Her appearance was the signal for jubilation on the

island, and preparations were instantly made for another disgusting celebration.

Sandy had not gone with the *Black Racer* in her last cruise; and the two of us watched the pirate ship beat through the mouth of the cove, and spread her wings to the soft breezes that stirred down from the hills of the island. 'Twas in the early part of the afternoon, and the bay was bright with the glint of a warm sun. A noisy and tumultuous crew thronged the sides of the pirate ship, already anticipating in noise the debauch which they knew awaited them on shore. Unusual signs of a sea fight marked the hull and rigging of the ship, her black flag floated gaily from mast-head, but her rigging was cut and torn as though cannon shot had plowed ruthlessly through it.

Sandy's keen eyes noted these signs, reporting them to me in his own way; then when the anchor splashed in the water he left my side to mingle with the men on the beach. I could hear the confused murmur of voices, the creaking of ropes and blocks, the splash of oars, and the sharp commands of officers. From the sounds and sights I could gain a faint impression of the scene below; and when Sandy returned, an hour later, I welcomed his footsteps with eager anticipation. He stood a moment resting before speaking, and from his manner I judged something heavy weighed on his mind.

"Well, did they capture their prize?" I asked impatiently. "And did they murder and kill the crew?"

"They met a big clipper ship, but they had ter fight fur the prize," he answered slowly.

"Then some got what they deserved! How many of the pirates were killed?"

"Twenty, an' as many more wounded."

"They must have met a plucky crew; I wish I had been there to help them. A good captain they must have had, and brave! Was he killed? He must have fallen; or his ship would never have been taken. What was his name, and that of his good ship?"

Sandy replied slowly, showing less interest in the pirates' mishap than the occasion demanded: "He was a good fighter, and he got away, slipped overboard or somewhere. His name was Packer, or somethin' like that, his ship, the *Edith*, of Boston."

For a moment I doubted my senses, and asked over again; then with difficulty I controlled myself. 'Twas no coincidence, that I knew—the brig *Edith*, her skipper, Captain Packer. But the tormenting thought that held sway over every other consideration was: Where was Edith? 'Twas not unusual for a sea captain to take his young bride to sea with him; and if Captain Packer had married Edith, what was more natural than for him to name his ship after her, and take her away on the first voyage out! I grew silent with thought, scarce hearing the words of Sandy when he added:

"There's somethin' worse ter tell than that, an' I ain't holdin' it back ter deceive ye. Long Jim was wounded—not badly, but some—an' Dunkers, the Frenchman, was killed."

“And Silver Dick was not?”

“No, he’s back again; an’ he’s openly boastin’ that he’ll be the first lieutenant before another day.”

I spoke calmly, smiling as I said: “That means I am expected to kill myself, or wait and be killed by him.”

Sandy shifted his position, and continued uneasily: “I’d give more fur yer life if the capt’n wazn’t wounded; but, seein’ he can’t help ye much, it looks as if somethin’ might happen before mornin’.”

“Would Silver Dick murder a blind man?” I asked quietly, unwilling yet to tell Sandy of my restored sight.”

“He’ll do it on the square; he won’t murder ye as that thievin’ Frenchman might had he lived. Of the two I’d rather be killed by Silver Dick.”

This was poor consolation, and I made answer shortly: “I don’t know that I have much choice in the matter; one pirate’s steel is about as bloody as another’s. But I should like to know the manner of death I am expected to meet.”

“There won’t be but one way; ’twill be by sword or cutlass. Silver Dick would never kill an enemy any other way.”

“Even so ’twill be a farce,” I answered, “for I couldn’t see his sword within an inch of my throat; he can run me through without effort.”

Then it was that Sandy turned toward me, and asked almost persuasively: “Don’t ye think ye could see a little—just enough ter stick him as ye did Grizzly Mike?”

He was suspicious of my blindness, intent still upon believing that I was merely feigning; and in truth I now was, and the thought made me smile. I realized then how great this protection had been to me; for none had cared to strike a blind man, considering him harmless and helpless. 'Twas this more than the fear of the sword arm which had struck down their best men that had kept me free from physical harm; but now circumstances were altered. The ambition of one man to succeed me would not be held in leash through sentiment.

But I did not wish yet to break the illusion, and so I spoke, changing the subject: "You did not tell me whether they brought back much treasure."

"There was little money or treasure aboard; but the capt'n brought away the skipper's wife. She——"

I was on my feet instantly, despite the effort to remain calm; and with sudden emotion grasped the arm of my companion. "What do you mean?" I demanded fiercely. "Tell me the story straight! Was the ship's name the *Edith*, of Boston; her captain's name Packer; and Long Jim brought the skipper's wife back to this island? Speak, man! Speak quick! Is that the story?"

Sandy growled, writhing under my grasp, "I don't see nothin' in that ter make ye want ter break my arm. What of it, if 'tis true, which it is?"

There was defiance in the tones; but I relaxed my grasp, and stepped back, not heeding his further grumbles. What horrible fate had willed that

Edith should fall among such a nest of pirates! 'Twould have been far better had Captain Packer killed her outright!

I walked back to the stone fort with new sensations tormenting. Silver Dick's threat to kill me assumed new form now; I was not prepared to die. I would have to live to rescue Edith from the murderous cutthroats; yet what power had I to perform this task—a helpless prisoner on the island myself, unable to get beyond its confines?

XXVII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

YES, there was now good reason to live. That night Silver Dick, I knew, would seek to take my life, and I would have to offer battle. 'Twere better to do this openly, and in full sight of his men, than to wait for some sudden ambush where none might witness it. So, when the dusk of evening came, I walked down toward the beach where the early signs of the barbarous feast were already appearing.

Fires flickered and flamed in a dozen places; groups of men were struggling for positions before the casks of wine, which they opened with mallets and pieces of rock. Some were already half intoxicated, and mad fancies were reeling through their brains. Among them I walked, scarce noting the words and stares directed toward me, some smothering in drunken anger curses that made the blood boil.

As I proceeded the revelry increased. I neared the center of the boisterous crowd, edging my way roughly at times through the surly groups of pirates. Some jostled me rudely; others in drunken stupor touched me familiarly, and spoke with indecent jest,

while a few shrunk back in silence from the man who saw not, yet stared with open eyes straight ahead. 'Twas thus that some, with superstition, had their fears worked upon without cause from me.

Steadily advancing, I reached the very middle of the crowd, and stood a moment watching and listening. There were rude language and ribald songs; disputes and angry words and quarrels brewing that nothing but the sword could settle. There was little attention paid to me at first; and I waited undisturbed for Silver Dick's appearance.

'Twas long before his ugly visage appeared; then 'twas dim in the light of the fire so that he did not recognize me. When he approached nearer some looked up, knowing the boast that Silver Dick had made, and wondered at the temerity that brought me to my doom. 'Twas little they thought that I divined their meaning glances, and read the thoughts flashed in their faces. There was a rough challenge in the voice which suddenly spoke out of the dim circle of faces:

"'Tis a fool that comes to his own slaughter; then 'tis a fool and a blind man that I kill to-night."

The man strode forward, laughing at his own words; but I faced him without replying.

"I've sworn ter kill ye before mornin'," he continued, halting within a few paces of me; "an' now yer time has cum."

Then I spoke calmly, yet with emphasis: "And when I heard of that empty boast, I said, 'Silver Dick is a fool, and I shall teach him manners! Be-

fore the moon is up I shall run him through the body as I ran this sword through Grizzly Mike's arm.' And the moon will soon rise!"

I pointed dramatically toward the horizon, where the silver crest of the young moon was already tinging the heavens with its white light. There was a stir among the men, and they crowded around in a circle. Silver Dick laughed, and drew his sword, saying with an oath:

"'Twill be no moon that ye'll wait fur; 'tis now ye'll die."

Advancing toward me he would have made a lunge at my breast, but I stayed him with the words: "Stop! I kill only to punish for crime. 'Tis for the murder of Dunkers in battle, with his face to the foe, that you must die. 'Tis only a coward that I kill; and the sooner done the better."

There was a growl from the crowd, whose suspicions were easily aroused, and a curse from Silver Dick. Then his sword whistled through the air, cutting a semicircle in the light of the crackling fires; but before it could descend mine met it. They clashed in mid-air, and seemed to ring out a challenge. A few sharp passes, and I knew 'twas an easy victim that faced me. Mad with passion Silver Dick had thought to run me through with ease; but when my eyes followed him, and he saw that I was not blind his hand trembled and his breath came and went heavily. He divined the truth before the men around me; yet after the first shock of surprise he redoubled his efforts.

But his fighting was that of bully and cutthroat, and not of one accustomed to fencing. I played with him until the light of the moon flooded the island. Then the heart was not in me to kill him; 'twas too much like murder. So with skill that I had learned from Aaron Burr, I disarmed him, flinging his sword upward with a ring that cut sharply on the night air. Then in anger and mortification he plunged violently toward me, drawing a knife from his belt to sheath in my body. I raised the point of my sword to hold him back; but so impetuous was his charge that he impaled himself upon it. With a shudder, I tried to withdraw it, and avert the accident; but 'twas too late. The man gurgled, and fell sideways, dropping the knife intended for me.

'Twas the first human life I had taken; and a new fear seemed to seize me. For all my threats and adventures I had been guiltless of human blood; and the sight of the lifeless body thrilled me. I would have turned away in sorrow and disgust; but I knew I had a part to play.

A murmur of voices rose above the quietness of the scene; and in the cheer that followed I knew I had won new fame among the pirates. Once again I had conquered one of their number, casting him down with ease. This skill and prowess excited their admiration, and few thought of sympathy for the one who had so recently stood among them, boasting of his ambition to lead them.

For a moment I stood awed by my deed, and

shocked at the spirit of the men who would so soon disregard one of their number who had fallen. Then, before the cheers subsided, I recalled myself. The game was not yet won ; there was still time for accident. The brutes around might admire the strength I had shown ; but in the next breath they might turn upon me and rend me to pieces. Such was the uncertainty of their passions !

Fully conscious of my danger, I stooped, and released the sword from the stiffening body of my adversary, and placed it in my own scabbard. Then with a fine show of bravado, that I was far from feeling, said : " I shall use this on the next one who seeks to displace me ! "

Without more ado, I strode from the group, followed by murmurs and cheers of admiration. The pirates liked such exhibitions of courage ; and they were ready now to follow me as their leader. I doubt not that I could have led a revolt against Long Jim ; and for a period such an adventure filled my mind. Long Jim was then wounded ; and there was no more favorable time to beat him at his own game. With his own men I might crush him, and have my revenge.

I hesitated on the outskirts of the crowd ; wondering whether that was the policy to pursue. For a long time I swayed between two opposite inclinations ; which should conquer I knew not ; 'twas a moment of perplexity. While thus debating, a step, stealthy and soft, sounded near ; it had crept upon me unawares, and even now I knew not how near it had ap-

proached. Instantly a sense of personal danger swept all other thoughts from mind; and the sword at my side came from its scabbard. I would at least be ready for the enemy.

“Who comes?—speak! or I shall strike!”

I spoke menacingly, and stepped forward in the darkness to add weight to my threat; a bold front, I thought, would prove effective, knowing as I did that the pirates now respected my powers. Yet withal I would not have been surprised had the point of a sword touched my chest or throat; but instead the voice of Long Jim spoke thus:

“’Tis nothing to fear, my lad; I’ve come ter congratulate ye. Ye did yer duty well; stuck Silver Dick like a bullock. I saw it all. ’Twas neatly done; an’ no man will dare dispute yer rights now.”

“Where were you when I fought him?” asked I in astonishment.

“I stood back of the circle; an’ I waz goin’ to speak for ye, but ye seemed not to need it. How ye managed to get around so ably when ye’re blind, I know not; ye must be able to see jest a little out of the corners of yer eyes.”

’Twas useless longer to deny it; so I spoke with little attempt at deception; “’Tis no credit to you that I can see again.”

Long Jim stared hard at me out of the darkness, but he carried no sword in hand, and I feared him not. My own I held ready for action; in that moment I thought of revenge. I could kill him without trouble. He seemed to read the danger in my

eyes ; and for a moment there was weakness in his face. Was he a coward at heart ?

But the thought of Edith held me. Her danger would not be averted by destroying Long Jim ; it might be increased when the fury of the mob would seek to wreak vengeance upon me for the death of their leader. So I desisted, dropping my sword, and returning it to the scabbard. If Long Jim read my thoughts, he showed it not ; but smiling he said :

“ Then if ye can see again, lad, come with me, and I shall show ye a prize that will please ye. But ’tis better to keep a safe distance apart.”

In turn I smiled, and then followed him. We entered the old stone monastery, now turned into a fort, and walked through the cool corridor, then along a stone flagging to a chamber where the pirates often assembled for deliberations. We did not stop here, but continued down another flight of stairs to a strange gallery.

“ This is all new to ye,” he explained. “ ’Tis few who cum here.”

Thoughts of another infernal underground prison startled me, and I halted. He replied quickly, seeing my suspicions : “ No, ’tis not another prison. ’Tis a treasure I keep here.”

Then once more I yielded to him, and walked behind till we suddenly entered a room dimly lighted. ’Twas impossible to see far in it, but I heard Long Jim saying :

“ ’Tis something ye value above gems, I wot not.”

I thought he spoke of his treasures at first ; but

suddenly I saw his meaning. Out of the semi-darkness a form appeared slowly, and I started forward, crying: "Edith! Edith!"

I stretched forth my hands to touch her, adding: "My God, Edith! Why did Providence send you here?"

For reply she sobbed softly; I drew back, touching her hair, and gazing intently at her. The stone walls and ceilings of the chamber seemed to whirl around; my mind grew dizzy. I staggered, but still clung to the form by my side. Then in mingled agony and joy, I groaned:

"Priscilla! Cousin Priscilla! Can it be true?"

From sheer love of her I would have clasped her to my bosom; but the remembrance of our last parting restrained me. Turning instead, to Long Jim, I said in sharp defiance:

"If you hurt a hair of her head, I swear before God, I'll have my revenge; yea, I'll rise out of my grave, if need be, to kill you!"

There was a sneer in the voice when he answered: "I ain't much afraid o' spirits."

Then thinking that defiance was useless, I turned to Priscilla again and murmured: "Tell me what evil circumstances led you into the power of this man! When did you leave Boston, and why did you sail with Captain Packer?"

A hundred questions fell from my lips in tumultuous succession, and time passed swiftly as we bridged the past, and lived over again our old life in Boston.

XXVIII.

OUR FLIGHT ACROSS THE ISLAND.

WE were allowed to meet often after that first interview ; and, while escape was impossible, we were not prisoners ; but fear of impending danger hung heavily over our lives. Even the calmness of the day and night seemed to forebode evil. And through it all we realized the helplessness of our position ! What could I do to stay the hand of the enemy ? I was in fear that Long Jim had some devilish plot to punish me, into which he would now draw Priscilla to drive more deeply the mortal hurt he would do me. This more than thought of personal suffering weakened my spirit ; and I daily grew more servile in my attitude. I could bide my time if it would avert the blow from one who was dearer to me than life.

I spoke not of this to Priscilla ; to her I made light of the danger that lurked around ; yet there was ever uppermost in our minds the desire and hope of escape from the pirates. We talked and planned of this ; but the day of action was postponed. There was little need of risk when danger was afar off ; so we waited, and made the most of strange circumstances.

No momentous change followed the days and weeks that came and passed ; and our peace remained undisturbed ; our apprehensions unfulfilled. The tropical summer changed to pleasant winter ; all life grew sweet and fragrant on the island, making it an earthly paradise.

The heavy odor of innumerable flowers and trailing vines intoxicated the senses ; and the song of birds filled woods and mountains with rare music. Below came occasionally the lewd song of some sailor ; the cries of a midnight brawl ; or the bacchanalian revelry that celebrated the return of more successful expeditions ; but beyond these peace and quietness reigned for us.

The idleness of the life had its fascination, which we could not wholly escape. All nature seemed aslumber, resting between its moods of tropical heat and hurricane storms. The limpid blue of the sea blended harmoniously with the green of shore and gray of mountain peak. We dreamed through the days, enjoying while we could, but always ready for the stress of the storm when it should come. Neither deluded the other into the belief that it was forever to last. So one day, when Sandy informed me that I was to go with the next expedition under Long Jim, there was no great surprise. This I had expected ; he would separate us for a season—probably forever.

Matters were rapidly approaching a crisis : I dared not look into the future, there was so much at stake. For two days I brooded over the change ; then pleaded

with Long Jim to let me remain behind, humbling myself before him as never before—all for the love of Priscilla. I pleaded in vain; the man was obdurate, replying:

“She ain’t a kind ter be afraid ter stay behind; and if there’s danger she’ll find another lover soon enough to take her off yer hands.”

At this brutal rejoinder, I shuddered; I could not much longer hold the passion within me; and without word I turned and left his presence. Yet I had resolved that I would not accompany him; his expedition would go without me.

The following day I explained all to Priscilla; it was a time for courage and boldness. There was no room for hesitancy or half-way measures; we had to act, and that quickly. When our danger—her danger—was drawn briefly in words, I added:

“Are you ready to make the attempt to escape with me, Priscilla?”

“Yes, Allin, quite ready,” was the steady response.

“To-night, then, we must leave; we can cross the mountains to the other side of the island. There we may signal a ship; at least we can live in the rocks and caves till help comes. Will you trust yourself to me?”

Then bitterly, I added: “I can stand between you and danger; and none shall touch you until they kill me first. That is all I can offer you now.”

“Allin, what more could I ask? I will go with you to-night!”

I took her hand, and would have carried it to my lips ; then the remembrance of my position stopped me. What right now had I to offer such homage to her ? 'Twould be selfishness to assert such rights and privileges, which she, in her helplessness, might ungrudgingly give.

We planned the details of the flight ; arranged to leave the place early in the evening, carrying with us only such provisions as we might need at once. The tropical forests were generous with their supply of fruits and nuts ; with them in abundance we could not starve. In some cave facing the western horizon, with the blue ocean lapping at our feet, we might hide till some passing ship could send us relief. I fancied that after a few days' hunt Long Jim would abandon the search to set forth on his contemplated expedition. In this I did but show my ignorance of his character.

'Twas a few hours after dusk when we started ; bidding farewell (an eternal farewell, we hoped) to the pirates' headquarters. We had been allowed such liberty that no fear of pursuit till morning disturbed our minds. We passed from the gardens and grove around the old fortress to the wild jungle of tropical growth beyond ; and then for an hour we struggled through its lace-work of vines and twigs, emerging finally on the slope of the far hill in a place of security to rest. Neither had spoken during this journey, but walking side by side we toiled on.

"Rest now," I said, as she panted with the exertions made ; "there is no fear of pursuit before

morning ; and if we go directly west we must reach the sea coast ere that."

On the mossy rocks we reclined, waiting for renewed strength to continue the journey, listening to the murmurs and voices of the forest inhabitants with bated breath. All was so strange and unnatural that we kept silent, holding close to each other as if for mutual protection.

"Now I'm ready to go on," suddenly exclaimed Priscilla, rising from her seat. "'Tis very dark around ; but we must climb the hills before morning. We must not get separated."

There was a nervous strain in the voice ; and I held her hand with reassuring firmness, feeling the tightening grasp in my own. "No ; we must not get separated," I repeated ; "we must cling together, come what may. When the road is rough and heavy, let me carry you."

Once indeed, I picked her in my arms, and toiled with her up the stiff, rocky hillside, pushing resolutely forward as though no extra weight troubled me. She was cut and pricked by thorns ; and the rough path bruised and hurt her feet so that I would have carried her most of the way. This she would not permit ; and so we often struggled onward while she was half faint with weariness.

Hours seemed to pass ; and I said : "There should soon be light ahead, Priscilla ! We must be nearing the coast."

"There is nothing but darkness," she murmured ;

"'tis so black that it makes me shudder. I shall welcome the dawn."

"That will come soon enough for our enemies to track us; we must make the coast ere that."

Again we trudged on over the weary mountain jungle, following neither trail nor compass, but watching the stars overhead. Then, suddenly, we seemed to reach a level; the climb grew less precipitous, and I said eagerly: "There is light ahead."

"Yes; daylight is breaking, Allin."

"Not daylight; but the reflection, of the sea; we are on the top of the hills; now we descend to the coast."

"Yes, 'tis the ocean; I see it now; but the path below is black; we might get lost in the jungle."

Her hesitation was natural; she would stay on the mountains tops till morning; and then push into the jungle by the light of the sun. But I reassured her; and again we plunged boldly forward, following more by instinct than knowledge the fearful windings of the forest. To both the world seemed to be wrapped in Egyptian blackness. We slipped, and nearly fell at times; but nothing daunted or detained us. Priscilla leaned heavier upon my arm; and I half carried her through the glades, soothing her frightened nerves by words and actions.

Thus 'twas that we crossed the great mountains, entered the dark valley in the middle of the island, passed through the tropical jungles and thickets, and finally came out upon the opposite coast—weary,

worn, bleeding, and sleepy. "'Tis growing lighter, Allin," Priscilla's voice suddenly whispered; "morning is here; and we are near the coast; I see the reflection of the waves."

"Let us find a resting-place, and hide in some nearby cave," I said, weary with my own exertions. "We can find a cave suitable to our wants; for the present it need offer little more than shelter. We can stay in it till the search is over; then we can look for better quarters."

On the bare face of the rock, protruding straight from the earth, and overlooking the glimmering sea, we rested, eating quietly of the frugal meal that we had brought. Body and soul were wearied with much exertion and anxiety; so we rested and refreshed ourselves, finding strength and courage in the food that nourished. Light of a new day slowly filtered through the trees from above, spreading westward in dull tints of gray, and even lighting up the darkness of the forest glades and rocky caves. Into these latter we now investigated; exploring the most likely for a place of hiding where none but keen-scented beasts could follow.

Before the sun had burst above the eastern horizon to proclaim the full coming of a new day, we had selected our future place of refuge,—a cave whose terminus was somewhere deep in the bowels of the earth. Through its series of rocky windings, we could stray, and baffle any human pursuer, finding relief at last for overwrought nerves. The ledge at its mouth overlooked the sea; and here we basked

in the early morning sun. There was no danger of pursuit yet; so I said:

“Sleep, Priscilla, while I keep watch; and the sun will warm and dry the dampness of the dew from our clothes.”

Slumber was heavy upon her eyelids; and when once made comfortable she slept peacefully, easily, and restfully. I watched by her side, listening for the sounds of steps that might descend the mountain-side; for the falling pebble that might betray any enemy lurking in the vicinity. But no sound came; not even a wind sighed through the tree-tops; nothing but the trilling of birds and croaks of reptiles stirred the morning air.

Then when morning was well advanced, with the sun standing directly overhead, the shout of a human voice suddenly startled the silent echoes of woods and mountains. We waited anxiously for its repetition; wondering whether we had been deceived. Thus for hours we listened, not daring to move or speak; and when night finally came down upon us we breathed freer. Had there been deception in that solitary echo, or was another human being lost or hiding in the caves? The gloom of night was intense on the mountain-side, and on our ledge of rocks we felt reasonably safe. As we sat there, gazing across the sea, the faint glimmer of a light flashed from the beach below; then it vanished, and in its place followed denser gloom. We then knew that another was near.

The early evening passed slowly, deep silence per-

vading the scene ; yet we dared not move or retreat to our cave. Priscilla was as helpless as I ; not even her sharp eyes could cut the gloom of the curtain that hung around us.

The danger seemed to have passed ; and we were breathing easier when the snap of a twig in the jungle not far away recalled our fears. It might have been the step of some stealthy forest creature ; or the unbending of some bush that had been torn from its rightful position. 'Twas near ; and its unknown possibilities made anxiety greater. Neither could guess what awaited us.

Out of the forest broke a clear whistle, dispelling all hopes of safety ; we knew then that we had been trapped. For an instant we clasped hands, holding them tightly ; but when footsteps unmistakably crashed through the bush, I rose to my feet, and gripped my sword. There would at least be an attempt to fight back any pursuers. Against the rock on which we had rested I braced myself, shielding my back in this way from those who would attack from the rear. Priscilla crouched at my side.

“ They cannot take us alive,” I whispered ; “ that I shall never permit ; 'twould mean death to me, and worse than death to you.”

I faced with staring eyes the unknown foe, feeling that in the intense darkness I was not so sorely at a disadvantage. They could not see well where to strike. Now the footsteps approached closer, surrounding us on three sides. I waited patiently for them to begin the attack ; neither spoke.

With the trap well sprung, and escape cut off, their leader said: "Ye'd better surrender without fightin'; 'taint no good tryin' ter spill blood. We've got ter take ye back dead or alive."

"Come on, then," I answered boldly; "'twill never be alive that you'll take me. I have the sword here that stuck Grizzly Mike; and I would try it against the steel of another."

"We want no fightin' with swords," growled the man, keeping well his distance; "we want ter take ye peacefully; if not we'll shoot ye down like a dog, an' tell the capt'n ye waz killed in fightin'."

This cold-blooded threat calmed me for a moment, and the thought of a stray bullet striking Priscilla gave weakness to my arm. I would have replied a challenge to this; but Priscilla answered me thus:

"Allin, you must surrender. Make these men promise to conduct us back to Long Jim, and we will surrender without a fight. There is a chance yet. Long Jim will listen to me; he must; I know more of his work than you."

I did not answer, so baffled was I; but Priscilla rose from her position, and spoke to the men, demanding the terms she wanted.

"We'll promise all that," said the leader, showing relief in his voice, which I detected. But I interrupted impetuously:

"I shall not surrender—not unless I keep my sword, and return with my companion under my protection. If any attempt to touch her, I shall kill

him on the spot; otherwise I will not use my weapon."

There was much parleying and threats at this; but I was obdurate, and held out for my terms. These were finally sullenly granted.

So by early morning we began to retrace our steps across the island—disappointed, heavy-hearted. We walked abreast of each other, I holding one hand on her arm, the other clasping tightly the sword-hilt.

XXIV.

CAPTURE AND PUNISHMENT AGAIN.

DEJECTEDLY and silently we tramped through forest glade and up steep hill-side, lagging steps seeming never so wearisome before. The future held dark and fearful possibilities for us ; we dared not face it in all its unknown terrors. Yet there was hope in each other's presence ; we seemed to find new strength and courage therein—a subtle influence that we could not explain.

As we neared our journey's end a great wave of regret possessed me ; I feared we had made a mistake. 'Twas still not too late to retract. I held my sword in my hand I could use it to good effect, and then both of us could die. Would it not be better than what awaited us ? I stopped, undecided ; Priscilla, seemingly divining my meaning, urged me gently onward ; and the voice of the leader growled savagely :

“What now ! 'Tis no time to stop ! Move on !”

There was more threat in his voice ; for he already saw the beetling cliff near the old fortress ; but that did not decide me. I was past fear of physical punishment ; 'twas the mental torment that tortured. Then Priscilla said :

"No, Allin, not now ; we must go on ! There is only death to resist here ; there may be hope ahead."

Marvelling at her intuition, I resumed the tramp without words ; but my head was hung in dejection. I knew that the spirit of war and hope had departed from me.

When we reached the old Spanish fortress, I heeded not the sound of life and activity that surged up from below ; nor noticed the voices of those around. When we stood before Long Jim, I was equally indifferent to his words. Yet they fell monotonously upon my ear, and I was forced to hear them. They were : "Desertin' ain't a crime that we have to punish often, especially among officers. The men don't like deserters ; neither do I ; an' nothin' but death can be dealt out to ye. It only remains to decide what kind o' death."

There was a stern, menacing ring in the voice ; and I doubted not that the death would be immediate and ghastly. Yet I thought not of that ; but for an instant stepped forward, and said :

"You have me in your power, Long Jim, and you can do with me what you please. At one time I hoped to live to see the day when I could have my revenge ; but that is not to be. You have triumphed ; you made me suffer the torments of hell for eight months in a living tomb ; then for a while you robbed me of what made life worth living, taking from me the power to see God's sunlight and flowers ; now you can take my life,—all that remains for you to take. That you can have, and make the

torture what you will ; break the bones of body day by day ; tear muscles from their sockets ; burn the nerves with red-hot irons ; and kill me inch by inch. I will not complain ; I will not curse you, not even if shrieks come unbidden from my lips ! I shall die blessing you if you will grant my last prayer ; that shall suffice to cover all your sins, and wipe out the old score between us."

Pausing a moment, I stepped nearer, and, with bowed head, pleaded : "My only prayer is that you will save my cousin—this fair woman whom I love better than life, better than death, better than hell or heaven!—from danger and indignities. Restore her to her people ; send her back to Boston unharmed ; protect her with your life while she must be among you ;—do this, and God in heaven shall have my prayers to forgive your many sins. Not even death shall keep me from interceding for you ; and if prayers have any virtue—if the supplications of a tortured soul—if the love of man for another can stay the hand of punishment after death ; then all this may be yours, and I shall be content. Here I am ; there is my sword ! I renounce it forever ; it shall never be raised against you or your men !"

I flung the weapon to the stone floor ; and advanced, holding out my hands. My plea had been made ; I could only wait the verdict. There was a strain of weakness in the voice that replied, but not mercy.

"Death and torture for ye have already been decided upon," he slowly said, "yer plea is too late for

that. As for your mistress, she'll do as I bid her ; she's in my power."

Then my hands fell nervelessly at my side ; for a moment I regretted the surrender of my sword. I stood motionless, preparing for a spring, which I knew would be the death struggle for the two of us. I would carry two souls into eternity. Before that fatal leap could be made, Priscilla spoke, stepping before me :

" You dare not sentence him to death ; nor me ! Your own crimes will not let you ; they will torment you to the end of the grave. You sought to ruin my father, heaping crimes upon his head that he never deserved, intimidating him by means so foul that even you should blush with shame. Yet with all your sins you are coward at heart ; you dare not put my cousin to death, nor touch me with your foul hands ! I have that within my power which shall crush you ; which will drive you from the high seas ; which will deliver you to the justice which has long waited for you. I can defy you, knowing that with all your men around you are not safe, that at any moment this old fortress may quake to its foundations. Think you there is no God that will punish such foul deeds as you have committed ; that he did not look down upon you when you struck that foul blow in the night and killed your mother—murdered her as the toad would not kill its worst enemy ! That was your first crime ; but it has been multiplied over again a thousandfold ; and they all cry out for vengeance. You may turn pale, sneer at my

words, look at your men, and smile ; but in your own heart you know that you have come to the end—to the brink of the grave.”

Then turning about, she continued, addressing the pirates around : “ Did I but tell you, men—pirates and cut-throats though you be—of the foulness of this man’s crimes you would spring upon him and rend him to pieces. Did he not besmirch my father’s name with a crime that only accident permitted ; and then in his greed force a compact with him to deliver helpless ships and their crews into his power for you to murder ? All that you accepted, and stood by him ! But what of the poor sailors of your number who have disappeared, of Silent Pete, whom you all loved and followed, until one night his body drifted in with the tide, stabbed to the heart ; of old Captain Lascar, who led you to many a victorious fight, and won your hearts by his fairness in dividing the spoils, until he died of poison, which you thought some dread disease ; of Jacques, the peaceful old ship-carpenter, who was left stranded on the bar off Cypress Island, to watch the golden treasures buried there ;—what of the half dozen of your mates who went forth in the long-boat off Cuba’s coast to bring water, and were drowned, because the boat had been plugged before it left the ship ; and what of the mysterious disappearances of many of your number, whose blood now calls for vengeance ! Is not the fiend who committed these crimes, your enemy—my enemy—God’s enemy—every man’s enemy ? Is he to live, to drive more of your number to their long

account ; to murder us all in his cold, underhanded way ? ”

There were ominous growls around ; and the voice of Long Jim essayed once to speak ; but Priscilla continued, waving him to silence :

“ Let me finish ! ’Tis not to-day that your end is foredoomed ! God will not permit it ; you have one more chance.” Then addressing the men once more : “ You need his leadership, if he will accept your orders. This island and its people are doomed before another fortnight, if I am not returned to Boston. Captain Packer carried instructions back to Boston, if harm befell me, to seek my father—the partner in crime with this man (but thank God against his will !)—and he would send enough ships and men here to destroy all of you. He will do it, for naught can satisfy a loving father outraged of his daughter. Within a fortnight I must be in Boston, or your stronghold will be demolished. Every inch of water ; every ship ; every trick you would play, is known ; not even your captain can deny that. I defy him !

“ There is only one way to avert this. Return me to Boston within the fortnight, and all will go well. I will blot out your existence from mind ; none shall know of what I have seen. But with me goes my cousin—this man whom you would condemn to death. You may think my threat is empty ; but you will live to see the day you will regret not accepting my offer. As sure as there is a God in heaven, and as sure as the angels at this moment look down and see

us; just so sure shall punishment come upon your heads if harm befalls either of us."

There was silence in the room; even the breathing of the men seemed soft and muffled. In that moment when human feelings were stirred the battle seemed to waver, and go in our favor; but the power of Long Jim was not yet broken, and finding himself exposed and ridiculed and threatened he grew desperate. Speaking with a sneer in his voice, he said:

"It ain't in my nature to offend a lady, an' she—the daughter of an old friend; but she asks more 'n we can grant. The matter was voted upon; the rest is with Sandy. He can do his duty."

There was a shuffle of footsteps near me; then hesitation; was Sandy ready to lead a revolt? Once more the captain's voice spoke with a dangerous ring to it:

"Sandy, it rests with you; the matter is finished. Take him to his old prison. 'Tis a merciful death there; an' I approve of it."

Sandy moved toward me; but before he could lay hand upon me Priscilla touched my arm, and broke forth:

"Cousin Allin! Cousin Allin! What can I do for you? They will kill you there, and I am helpless! O take me with you; let us die there together! I shall not leave this place without you!"

There was a sob in the voice; and I touched her head, saying with a calmness, that I felt not: "No, no, Priscilla, 'twould kill you; but the gloom is nothing to me now. I can die there by degrees."

"No, no, not die," she cried; "but live—and hope."

"Yes, yes; live I must," I whispered hoarsely; "I shall live to help you. God will not desert us; He cannot; He will not. I shall bide my time."

Then turning to Sandy I said: "I am ready now; bury me in your infernal prison; but you cannot kill me. I refuse to die. My time will come!"

Without another word, I walked away, treading firmly by the side of my jailer, leaving Priscilla behind to her unknown fate.

Yet withal there was a surging desire to stay with her; to defend her, if need be, by force of arms. I dared not think of her fate. I held myself under control with fearful exertion of will-power. At every step the poignancy of my sorrow increased, robbing me almost of the power to speak or walk. When we reached the last step of the long, damp corridor, I was weak with fear and trouble. Turning to Sandy, I said:

"You remember the first time we came here how I frightened you by telling you that I could kill you while your back was turned? Then you took me for a madman; you remember it, Sandy?"

My jailer replied affirmatively, and I continued:

"Well, then, I have far more temptation to kill you now; and I could do it to escape, not for my sake, but for the woman I love. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Then why did you not flinch and watch me?"

Did you think your kindness to me would save you? I am ten times as desperate now as when I first came down here; and, Sandy, I can see as well as you."

"Yes; but I am not afraid," responded he, calmly.

"Why not?" I asked stupidly. "Why not?"

"Because ye could not escape if ye killed me; and 'twould destroy her last chance."

"Is there a chance yet, Sandy—one chance?—no, not for me, but for her? Promise me, Sandy, that you will protect her, and take her from these fiends; and kill her if necessary. Promise me that; and I shall count you as my friend."

"I will see that no harm comes to her," he answered. Then I would have clasped his hand in mine; but a horrible suspicion entered my mind. Speaking with passion, I said:

"You will see that no harm befalls her, you say? Why do you promise that? Is it for my sake; her sake, or——"

I hesitated; the man laughed shortly; I was at his side as I continued: "Or do you do it for your own sake? Do you—dare you—think of her as——"

I did not frame in words my suspicions; but clutching the man's arm and throat, added hoarsely: "Answer! You make me either a devil or an angel! Which shall it be?"

The man gasped and growled angrily: "Why do you try to kill me? No man has dared to lay hands on me like that for twenty years without dying for

it. I can knife ye here, an' no man would help ye."

"That I know; and you can strike; but tell me first your meaning."

He remained quiet a moment; then added: "She'll suffer no harm if I can help it; neither will ye. There's no need wastin' words in quarrelin' over it."

I had not understood the man; now I knew that he was not as bad as his captain. I walked by his side quietly, wondering how much he could be trusted. In a few moments the trickle of the water in the Suicide's Pool fell on my ear.

"Will that be my end after all?" I murmured; "it has a strange fascination for me."

I walked to its brink, and stood; Sandy suddenly jerked me back, saying: "Ye don't want to fall in there; 'twould be the last of ye."

"What of it?" I asked, laughing madly, the horror of the tomb once more entering my blood. "What of it? All would be ended. Why should I live—and suffer here?"

"Ye jest said ye wanted ter live fur her," my jailer answered, rebukingly; an' ye promised her ye'd live ter help her. Can't ye keep yer word?"

Shame at my weakness spread over me, and I replied penitently: "You are right, Sandy; I should not give way so. I must live to help her; but how, my God, I know not! You must help us, Sandy; help her! Did you ever have a sister or mother that you loved? Then think of them when you see her; and protect her."

My words sounded wild and incoherent, so tumultuously did they spring from my lips ; and whether or not they fell upon deaf ears I could but guess. When Sandy finally withdrew not even the clanking of the chain and lock of my prison door disturbed me. For a full hour I sat and stared into the blankness of darkened space. There were visions and flashes of light ; but they played in formless disorder before my brain.

Then as I rested my head I fell asleep and dreamed. Strange sights passed in quick succession ; scenes of other days were mirrored before me. When I came back to my dark underground prison, I heard the trickling of water, drop by drop, again. A ray of light seemed to shoot through the prison chamber ; I followed it with strange, unseeing eyes till it lost itself in the pool of water. But it played in flashing prisms on the surface ; striking downward till it met another, forming an angle far below. I leaned forward to watch the light, intent upon its meaning and purpose.

XXX.

THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE.

WITH the return of consciousness there was born another hope—a new desire to escape. Life now held forth promises that had once fled; death was abhorrent to desire and ambition. I strode back and forth in the prison; thoughts working rapidly, and plans running riot through the brain. 'Twas the awakening of a new nature; another life had been released. The old apathy and indifference, born of anguish and crushed hope, were now no more; they had lived their day to serve their purpose. 'Twas now a period for activity.

So I planned escape; thinking meanwhile of Priscilla. Memories of her hastened efforts; feverishly stirring emotions within me that had no satisfaction. Her danger was my anguish; her fear my punishment; so, with sharpened wits and straining mind, I studied the galleries around, the hewn stone walls, the prison room, the iron door which led upward to freedom.

Around the solid immovable rocks had been cut away by trickling water, which for ages had worn the granite; and the early Spanish missionaries had added to the carvings of nature the winding corri-

dors, which led to different parts of the cave. The iron door alone suggested the possibility of escape; but that was firmly imbedded in the stone. I shook it till the chains, bolts, and locks rattled and echoed; but they were unyielding.

Then I turned my attention hopefully to the inside prison room—the tunnel-like hole down which my food was lowered. This led to the world above; and the rope dangling half way down offered encouragement. Climbing painfully upward, I succeeded in grasping this rope; and then with a prayer on lips and in heart I pulled myself slowly toward the surface of the earth.

Darkness obscured everything; covering objects from view by its fearful shroud. The rope swayed and creaked under my weight; and twice I hesitated, testing its strength before proceeding. Finding no danger, I renewed the ascent, straining muscle and nerve in the toilsome climb. The minutes passed slowly and painfully; the ascent seemed endless; but suddenly something hard and metallic touched my outstretched hands. 'Twas an iron ring through which my rope passed; holding an arm through this I rested and breathed easier.

When refreshed from my exertions, I examined my surroundings eagerly, hoping to find some door or entrance that would promise liberty. I had reached the roof of the deep hole; and its sides were smooth and solid. From side to side I swung my body, making the rope creak and groan; but I could find no door or resting-place for the feet or hands.

For many minutes I panted and hung suspended in mid-air; striving vainly to secure some landing-place, hoping to the last that fortune would favor me. But 'twas all a bitter disappointment; so ingeniously had the builders made the prison-hole that there was no chance of one finding an outlet in this way.

When I rested on the rocks below again, I was sore in body, and weary in spirit; there had been a reaction from the spirit of hopefulness. I knew now that the prison had been designed for desperate men; for those of resource and energy. Every avenue of escape had been sealed up.

Worn with hard thinking and physical exertion, I sat by the Suicide's Pool, watching the light play upon its placid surface. Before me glowed the prism of light; the beam which had nearly lured me to destruction. Its many-colored, changing hue fascinated; and I fell to studying and admiring it. There was a slight wavering motion that made it flash like the rays from a diamond: I moved my position, and the flicker followed. Where did this strange beam find its origin? Through what crevice did it come from the world above? I studied the rocks overhead; but they were dark and black, with neither chink nor crevice to admit light. From ceiling to sides my eyes traversed, dwelling upon every small vantage point, hoping to find some tiny hole which connected with the sunlight outside. But I was disappointed; the light came from the water; and there its origin baffled me.

Such peculiar phenomena interested, then puzzled;

and I rose from my position to walk around the pool. I plunged my hand into the water to let the beam reflect upon it; and when I withdrew it an accidental touch of lips to the hands startled me. The water was strongly salt; so salty, in fact, that it might have been scooped up from the sea. I had given little thought to the character of the water; but now it flamed upon my mind that it must come from the sea. It must have an underground connection with the great ocean without; if this were true there was still a wild, desperate hope.

The ray of light came in with the water through some subterranean channel; by following this guide might I not find freedom at last? I divested myself of cloak and outer garments; and stood by the pool's brink, debating whether to try the plunge. Again I thought of the old fascination; of the tales of suicides who had disappeared into the pool; and, in my bewilderment, I wondered if I was sane, or under the spell of some hallucination.

But 'twas not suicide that I was seeking now: 'twas not a mania for change and desperate chances. Mind and body were strong and full with the desire to live. I stirred the surface of the water; plunged a hand far down into it again; and held it up dripping with the brine. 'Twas cold and chilling; yet tonic with the salt of the sea. I stood for long time on the brink of the pool, playing with the water; and then satisfied that all was well I plunged into its depth, diving straight down toward the ray of light. The space seemed greater than I had imagined; but

in time my hands touched rocky bottom ; and ahead the ray of light suddenly broadened out into a large stream. It poured through a hole in the rocks, reflecting the crystal water in a thousand different shapes.

It required but a few seconds to strike boldly toward the hole ; swimming with mind and body alert to surroundings ; and ready at any moment to retreat if danger threatened. I had come to find a way of escape from the underground prison ; and nothing short of imminent death could intimidate me. The pressure of the water grew heavy and laborious, constraining lungs and heart ; but time, I knew, was precious, and I crawled through the hole, taking life in my hand. There was no retreat now ; the return trip was cut off unless new air could be found to refresh me.

So I scrambled forward, following the guiding light, and ready for what adventures awaited me. The jagged opening in the solid rock led into a wider passage where the light broadened into a still deeper and more effulgent path. All around the water was lighted up to a dull, greenish glow, through which swam strange fishes, with eyes, wide-open, staring at me. One slimy monster rubbed its clammy scales against my extended hand, making me shrink back with a convulsive shudder. The creatures of this darkened world showed no fear ; but rather curiosity. They knew not the meaning of my presence ; and with strange persistence they poked their cold noses against my body.

When I sprang up from the rocks, and began the ascent into clearer water, the region about brought refreshing change. Ahead there promised more light; and possibly air. I had now been under the water a full minute, which seemed like ten; and with lungs panting at the pressure I struggled to reach the surface. In a moment my head protruded above water; and all about me was the rocky roof of a great natural cavern. A tinge of ocean air breathed around me, dispelling some of the foulness of the damp atmosphere. Distant lapping and roaring of waves on the rocks told me that the ocean was not far. The walls arched above my head, leaving scarce room to swim along without touching their jagged edges. No boat could pass through such a narrow place; and once or twice I had to submerge my head to pass safely around low points.

I was swimming seaward now; buoyant with the thought that freedom was ahead; and with the light ever growing brighter and more cheering. I had scarce the patience to rest on the rocks, so eager was I to find the world beyond. As I proceeded the roof of the cavern broadened out, and towered forty feet above my head; and then it narrowed, and nearly cut off all progress. But through broad and low passage, and high and low roof, I swam ever onward, intent only upon finding the haven of rest that the light and lapping waves promised.

The sunlight then burst full upon the water; and the sea was mine. The rocky precipices rose sheer from the water's edge, forming almost unscalable

walls. There was barely room to find resting-place for hands or feet. With difficulty I secured a perch where I could study the place with some ease and comfort.

The ocean seemed never so sweet and fair; and with ravishing desire I gazed at the distant horizon, the rippling waves at my feet, and at the bluish green of the swell—white-capped and breaking on the rocks around. Sheer joy overwhelmed all other feelings; and, with freedom restored, I bowed head in silence, forgetting all else in the world save thankfulness. Not even remembrance of Priscilla's danger came to disturb my meditations; and for a sweet moment peace dwelt within my soul. Then came the reality of the future; the dangers ahead; the uncertainty of one who was dearer than life to me. A spasm of remorse for this moment of peace spread over me; and, partly refreshed from my exertions, I made ready to renew my battle with the sea.

I now had a task before me of which I could not guess the outcome; 'twas to swim around the island, or scale the rocks above my head. I pulled myself slowly up on the rocks to a point of better vantage. On every side towered the precipitous wall; and hemmed in behind was the expanse of ocean, tumbling and breaking furiously on a coral reef. There was little hope of passing through that raging sea of foam; and so I turned my attention to the rocks.

Above me fifty feet in the air was a wide ledge; it offered security that I did not feel in my present position. So I measured the distance between and

the toil of reaching it; then slowly began the ascent. By clinging to sharp edges of boulders, and twisting around corners and angles, I drew myself upward to the ledge. Scarce was I secure on it when a white heap of bones beneath my feet glistened in the sunlight; I shuddered at the sight, and wondered much at the meaning. They were human skeletons, bleached white in the sun of many a summer's day. There were five scattered about, in attitudes that told of their death-throes.

Puzzled, I stood gazing at them, thinking of shipwrecked sailors, and of helpless victims like myself. Then the truth dawned upon me; they were the prisoners, who, like myself, had escaped from the dungeon. They had not lost their lives in the Suicide's Pool; but had escaped to die on the ledge of rocks. Here was a prison from which there was no escape—except the sea. But that was better than slow death in the subterranean prison; for here was sunlight, pure air, and the freedom of the heavens and sea. Seating myself on the rocks, I gazed long and gloomily at the skeletons—tokens of my impending fate.

XXXI.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SUMMIT.

THE whitened heap of bones told their mute story vividly ; and I began wondering at their fate, and the circumstances that had brought them to such an end. Speculation like this was not strengthening, but weakening ; and I soon desisted, turning my attention to the surroundings. Far above me towered rocks, which no human being could scale ; below tumbled the restless ocean, dashing its breakers with sullen roar on rock and coral reef. Nature had planned the prison with all the cunning of human foresight ; and only the wings of a bird, or a rope let down from above, could effect a rescue. 'Twas a choice of starving on the ledge ; or of plunging into the sea to drown.

Around the beetling crags of rocks circled slowly a pair of huge vultures. Ever and anon they would swoop downward to stare with evil eyes at me ; they were eager for their feast of human flesh. They had picked clean the bones of five before me ; and they waited now for the sixth who had crawled up from the sea to die. This thought was maddening ; and, in loathing, I flung a rock at the creatures, hurling it

with wild malediction at their heads. But it fell wide of the mark, and splashed harmlessly in the sea, while the great birds continued their monotonous flight. How patiently and quietly they waited for their feast, circling with unhurried wings around the rocks, and watching with wide eyes my every movement! As a cat watches a mouse, so they stared and held me close within their range of vision.

To cheat them of their bloody feast became a mad desire with me; and I flung myself on the outer edge of the rock to gaze upward and downward. Below I could drop into the sea; above I might toil for hours, and then fall backward to be crushed on the rocks. Was that not better than slow starvation, with the vision of those birds ever in view, waiting for my death to begin their horrid feast? As I gazed upward the top of the rough rocks seemed to swim; and the floating clouds brought dizziness until all the heavens seemed to rock and tremble.

Still I was willing to attempt the ascent; to make one desperate effort to scale the heights, and cheat the birds of their prey. With the ascent once begun, I knew 'twould never do to look down; so with eyes turned heavenward I toiled upward, moving cautiously, warily, step by step.

'Twas a fearful fight for life; the sternest that man could face; and the fascination to look down was strong within me. With bloodless lips and feverish, straining eyes, I stared hard at the veined rocks, striking my head oft against them to bring back my tottering reason. With blood dripping

from torn hands, and nerves and muscles aching from pain and exhaustion, I toiled upward, fighting against odds that made the brain reel. From one jagged rock-edge to another, I passed slowly, crawling where I could not step, and ever clinging to points where no rest could be found. The face of the rocky cliff was smooth and precipitous, offering no foothold or vantage place, each niche in which my foot clung yielding to the soft pressure of the weight. There was no hesitation; no pausing to think; but ever upward and upward I was forced to climb; raving and cursing, and praying and pleading by turns. The mind wandered and wavered till red blood seemed to dash in crimson flood across my eyes. Then I felt my hold yielding; strength failing me; and the dizziness of brain sickening. But across my vision there floated the two black vultures,—calm, patient, and horrible. The sight revived me.

I could not yield to be devoured by them; so I recovered myself with an effort, and toiled mechanically upward again. Once my eyes swept the horizon; and a gleam of sunlight dancing on the waves was reflected to me. The calmness of that distant scene of peace lured senses into repose that nearly proved fatal. I rested a moment to close the eyes in pain; there was peace in rest; and I dozed for a moment in sheer weariness of mind and body. I would have toppled backward had not my head suddenly struck hard rock. I gave vent to a shriek; imagining in my waking dream that the vultures were already rending the flesh from bones.

Thus, alternating between hope and despair, I gradually neared the summit, crawling inch by inch, until at last I lay sprawled out on the face of the rock completely exhausted. I know not how long I slept. Every bone and nerve was sore and weak; blood was congealed and hardened on hands and face. It had trickled in crimson pools on the rocks; and was now glistening in the sunlight of another day. I raised my head and glanced around; near by sat the vultures, waiting for their feast, and still patiently sure of it. I was too weak to shout at them; so I dropped my head, and slept again.

'Twas night when I woke again; but out of the blackness I could distinguish the horrible forms of the persistent birds. The desire to kill them rose in my breast; with wild madness I raised a stone and hurled it at them. But I was too weak to hurt them, and I fell back exhausted to sleep till morning.

With the dawning of another day came new strength; and the craving for food and drink. I looked down the precipice I had climbed; and shuddered. I found myself on the highest summit of the island, with a barrier of great trees shutting it from view on nearly all sides. On this rocky retreat, I was safe from prying eyes; and none could see me, while far out at sea I could gaze. Beyond the trees I found a series of peaks and rocky headlands, which gradually descended to the lower levels of the island. From one of these peaks I could see the beautiful cove, where lay at anchor the pirates' ships, and scores of small boats. 'Twas a scene of beauty

viewed from above; and I lay there for many moments studying it with admiration.

Then hunger drew me down toward it; there alone seemed relief, though danger, too. I toiled slowly down the crest, following the line of huge boulders till I paused near the fringe of trees. These stunted growths were bent and twisted by the storms of centuries; and I fell to wondering at the tales of the wild sea they could tell. Suddenly out of their shadows grew living forms, moving under their leafy tops with no uncertain step,—four in all,—barely giving me time to hide before they were upon me.

Leading the procession was Long Jim, followed by Sandy, and two heavy-browed pirates, carrying between them a seaman's chest. 'Twas heavy with weight; and the men staggered unevenly under the load. They passed from the fringe of trees; crossed the intervening space of rocks and stones; then turned toward the summit of the peak. Crouching behind an enormous boulder, I watched them with the alertness of an animal hunted by hounds; waiting impatiently to discover their objective point, and the meaning of their strange journey. Once indeed I had to fling myself flat on the hard rocks to avoid detection; with heart beating there I waited for them to pass, anxiously dreading lest some accident should betray me. But no words were uttered; the quartette passed in silence, each intent upon his own thoughts; and when I raised my head cautiously they were some distance on their journey.

There was need to watch them carefully, for ever

and anon they turned and glanced back of them, as if dreading some spying eyes; and not till they stood on the summit of the peak did I dare move from my hiding place. Then I knew that curiosity would not be satisfied till I had crept upon them, and knew of their mission on the lonely rocks. Around the edge of the peak I skulked, hiding behind projecting rock and ledge; and often risking life and limb in passing across fissures and caverns; but always approaching nearer my objective point. Below the peak was a deep-cut ledge, which offered a safe retreat; toward that I crawled and climbed, ever holding the rocks between me and the summit. One slip of foot, or mistake of hand, would end all; either precipitating me into the valley below or alarming the pirates above.

Yet fortune favored me, carrying me to the ledge without mishap, from whence I could hear without being seen. Concealed there I listened; gathering from the awful stillness of the place that the men were beyond hearing or unnaturally quiet. Concerned lest I had made a mistake in location, I would have changed my position; but suddenly I drew back in alarm and terror, crouching into the darkest corner of the niche in the rocks. Before me—not five feet away—dangled a pair of legs, swinging into space without visible support; then followed the body, clinging tightly to a rope held from above. Slowly the man passed down and beyond the range of vision. 'Twas down the precipice which I had climbed up

with such fearful labor and terror ; and I shuddered strangely at the thought.

There dawned upon me then the fear that my escape from the subterranean prison had been discovered ; and, knowing of the outlet into the sea, the pirates were looking for me. Did they know that I would find the ledge where so many prisoners had left their bones to bleach in the tropical sun ? If search was being made for me, 'twould be short work to starve me out ; for now faint and weary with hunger capture had less dread than before.

The rope dangled uneasily before me, tightening and loosening by turns, till suddenly the weight on its end seemed relieved ; then upward it moved only to be lowered again with a second pirate swinging from its end. For a moment he hung suspended abreast of my hiding-place ; the sight renewed my fears of discovery. When he disappeared over the side of the cliff, I breathed easier, but still uncertain of my fate.

'Twas Sandy's or Long Jim's turn next ; which would follow first I could not guess. Thus wondering and speculating, I leaned forward when the rope started down on its third trip ; a strange longing stirring within me to meet my enemy in midair, if he should descend next. Instead of Long Jim or Sandy, the heavy seaman's box dangled in the air, and so close did it come I could have touched it with my hands. A hundred feet below it struck the ledge of rocks where I had rested after my swim in the sea ; there it was caught by the two pirates, and swung out of

sight. I marveled much at this ; recalling strange stories of adventure to fit this transaction ; but none brought any light.

Growing impatient at the proceedings, I risked discovery from above by peering far over the rocks ; thus seeing the pirates lift a huge slab of stone near the heap of human bones on the ledge. These they brushed aside, kicking them into the sea, where they rattled and gurgled in protest as they disappeared from sight. Underneath the stone was an iron door ; in this a chain and ring of steel, and, when the lock had been turned, the lid of metal was raised. Vainly I strove to see objects in the cavity thus exposed ; but nothing except darkness met my gaze. The pirates poured the contents of the seaman's chest rattling down the black hole ; then closed the iron door with a snap, dropped back the stone slab, and signaled to those above. The seaman's chest was hurled into the sea, where it danced upon the waves for long hours.

Hand over hand the two pirates climbed the dangling rope, one following quick after the other, till under their weight the rope strained and creaked. But 'twas a good stout hempen rope, and not likely to part. Yet even as I assured myself that the rope would hold, it suddenly snapped above me, dropping the two men backward as if shot. There were shrieks of despair and curses from below ; a heartless laugh from above ; then all was quiet. The men were dashed to pieces on the rocky ledge, one indeed bounding outward, and finally dropping into the sea.

Mystified and puzzled at this, I stood immovable, till the noise of a struggle on the rocks above me drew my attention. There flashed over my mind then the mystery of the skeletons on the ledge. This was the hiding-place for Long Jim's treasures ; and, as a sacrifice to his greed, the pirates who helped him bury them were offered up. Thus the secret was preserved.

The sharp crack of a pistol made me act quickly. Was Sandy too being offered up as a sacrifice? Springing to the edge of the rocks, I drew myself upward till I stood in full view. There was no time to waste. Before me, prostrate on the rocks, lay Sandy, bleeding freely from a wound ; before him stood Long Jim, with sword at the fallen man's breast. Before I could move, Long Jim spoke, saying :

“ Ye've been a faithful servant, Sandy, an' it makes me sad to kill ye ; yes, very sad. But 'tis all fur the cause, Sandy ; all fur the cause. I wouldn't have selected ye fur this work, if ye hadn't been so bold as to interfere with me when I would woo our fair young lady. Sandy, ye're too old to act the gallant ; an' ye should have known it. Fur bein' such an old fool, ye must suffer death ; 'twill be easy with the sword.”

He would have plunged the weapon into his body in another moment ; but I cleared the space in one desperate jump. My weight and momentum carried him a dozen feet from Sandy's side, rolling him over and over on the jagged rocks ; knocking the sword from his hands, and crashing his head against a

boulder till blood oozed from mouth and nose. I would have expressed my feelings in words; but when I looked the man was unconscious, past all thought of danger and vengeance. When I turned—still with words unspoken—Sandy crouched on hands and knees staring at me. There was fear and wonder mingled on his face; with bowed head he crossed himself piously, and murmured some prayer.

“’Tis time you prayed, Sandy,” said I, laughing at his fear. “’Tis long since you did it. Where did you learn to pray? Who taught you that? Your mother, I’ll wager, when a child on her knees.”

He nodded, but with tongue still cloven to the roof of his mouth.

“Who was your mother, Sandy?” then I asked, giving him time to recover. “Her name, Sandy, what was it?”

Still no answer; so I picked up Long Jim’s sword and pistol, and strode toward him, saying: “Tell me your real name, Sandy, and that of your mother. Hast no tongue yet?”

“I’ll speak; I’ll tell ye,” he gasped in faltering tones. “It hasn’t been on my lips fur these many years; but would to God it had been there oftener! ’Twas John Wooster, she named me; an’ she—God bless her, and curse me fur an ill begotten son!—was Hannah Wooster,—she who bore me.”

The eyes closed in prayer; and the knotted hands crossed again in supplication on the breast; but I laughed in glee and wonder, startling the man from his thoughts. He thought me insane, for I said:

“John Wooster!—and Hannah Wooster! By all that is good and mighty! I’ve found you at last! I started out at ten summers to find you, and now I’ve succeeded!”

I stepped forward and grasped his hands; but he held back, with fear in his bloodshot eyes. ’Twas no more than I expected; ’twas madness, he thought he read in my words and face. Or was I some unreal, unnatural creation that had risen out of the rocks to confront him with his crimes? Hastily withdrawing his hand from mine, he tried to crawl away, looking eagerly down the side of the cliff, debating whether or not to run. He crossed himself again, which made me add:

“You’ll have to do that often, Sandy, to find forgiveness for all your sins; they must be many, and the Lord must be good to forgive them. By all that’s sacred, I’d never forgive a pirate! I’d think of forgiving the devil first. And yet, I’m half inclined to forgive you, Sandy, for old time’s sake.”

This time, dropping his hands, he sank back upon the rocks, with a deathly pallor spreading over his face; a pool of blood collecting at his side. Then, realizing his condition, I added:

“I forgot you were wounded. Here, let me help you.”

When I raised the head from the rocks, the clotted blood appeared on neck and face, matted to hair and cloth. With gentleness and compassion, I wiped it away, while he murmured:

“How did ye get out o’ that black hole? Did ye—did ye——”

“No, Sandy, I didn’t rise up out of the rocks to save you,” replied I, finishing what I divined as his question. “I climbed up those rocks—up that precipice, which no mortal man ever did before, and never will again. ’Twas a miracle, Sandy, that I performed then.”

Suddenly remembering Long Jim, I turned to look at his prostrate form; ’twas still huddled up in a heap where it had fallen—consciousness not having yet returned. Yet a twitching of the limbs and muscles indicated life, and returning powers.

“No, not even Long Jim could scale those rocks,” I continued in a monotone. “I’ll wager my life against it. What say you, Sandy, shall we try it? ’Twould be a good scheme; and ’twill keep my hands from murder.”

Without waiting for Sandy to speak, I approached the side of the pirate captain; his glazed eyes still glared upward without meaning or sight. There was rope near at hand—all that was left of the piece that had lowered the pirate’s treasure to the ledge of rocks—and this I secured. Winding one end around the body of Long Jim, I dragged him toward the face of the cliff; then ’twas easy work to lower him over, laughing with joy at the punishment I would inflict.

“What are ye doin’?” asked Sandy weakly, staring hard at me.

“Putting our captain where he can watch his

treasures," replied I, lowering away. "The bones of his victims have guarded them long enough; they cry out now for vengeance. 'Tis his turn to watch."

The limp body on the rope swung through space, striking roughly against the rocks, and scarring face and hand with the contact. Foot by foot it went downward till suddenly it struck the ledge. Then I cut the rope, and flung it outward, laughing fiendishly the while.

"There, Sandy, he can watch his treasures till he can find a way of escape. I've given him a chance, and that's more than he gave his victims. He can climb up here, as I did, or go down to the sea. 'Tis all the same to me."

When I faced the wounded pirate there was satisfaction on the face; he had known the sweetness of revenge, and I read it in his expression. Seating myself on the rocks I said:

"Sandy, 'tis now your turn to tell me your story. A dozen times your mother told it to me; but I want the true one from your lips. I see you wonder at my words; they are not to be frightened at. I knew your mother—she was my nurse—and for twenty years she's been waiting for your return. 'Tis time she had her wish; and I'm going to take you back to her; you must go with me. The Lord and I may not forgive your sins, but she will."

It took time and patience to make him believe me; to convince him that I was sane, and not a maniac. Then piece by piece he told me the adventures of his life; of crimes and death that made me shudder; of

repentance that came often, but always too late ; of the brutalizing experiences that had drifted him into the wild, lawless life he had led. There were no details ; they were not needed to make the story ; imagination could fill them in to suit. When through, I hurled stones and pebbles into the sea below, listening intently to their splash in the water, and strangely disinclined to speak, so affected was I by the narrative. Then I said abruptly, looking hard at the pirate :

“Sandy, somewhere back on the island is the only woman I ever loved ; you know where she is. I shall find her, and take her from this island—not even the swords and guns of the pirates shall detain me. Will you escape from this place with me, or do you choose to stay with your old associates ? If you go with me, you must fight by my side, and mayhap be killed ; if you choose to stay you must remain on these rocks till I am safely away. I shall make good my escape ; and none shall stay me. Which shall it be, Sandy ? Choose now.”

There was no hesitation, and the hand that grasped mine was firm with honesty of purpose. “I’ll go with ye,” he responded ; “an’ die with ye, or escape together. I’m ready.”

I made no reply, but pressed the hand in turn, thus forming our compact.

XXXII.

IN SEARCH OF PRISCILLA.

WE did not tarry long on the rocks; 'twas a season for thought and action. Sandy grew stronger when his wounds were bound up; and once more he buckled on his sword, and stood ready for business. He was not so horrible in appearance, it seemed, as on that day when I first saw his scarred face; even the eyeless socket had less of disfigurement about it than usual. Certain it was, he was not a companion at arms to despise; for sword arm and shoulder were strong and muscular, showing training and hard service. The pair of us, I knew, would make a formidable wall of opposition.

Before moving away from the rocks, I peered down the precipice to take a last look at Long Jim; he was still unconscious. This I regretted. There would have been more satisfaction in knowing that he recognized me. Sandy approached my side, and said:

“Dost see anything?”

“Yes, our captain is there, but he knows us not.”

The man gazed steadily at me; and the single eye grew strange in its intensity. Then he spoke again, giving meaning to his gaze:

“ ’Twas up there ye came, without rope or help? How could ye do it? ”

“ There are more miracles performed on this island than you wot of, Sandy,” I answered smiling at his puzzled expression.

Then as we walked along the rocks, I told him of my escape.

We reached the fringe of weather-beaten trees, whose banners were flung to the breeze, and under their shadow we studied the fortress below, and the beach whereon the pirates had collected. Another ship had come in; and the pirates were full of its celebration. They had missed no one; and for aught they cared their captain could starve and rot on the cliff-side for days and weeks.

The day had now passed, and night was darkening the landscape; so when we moved from the shadow of the trees the dusk of evening shielded us from view. All was quiet and peaceful on the hillside, so much so that oppression and a strange fear seized me. Thoughts of Priscilla now possessed my soul; and the heart grew sick with longing and fear for her. Where was she while this revelry went on? Had accident—or worse—befallen her? Ages seemed to have come and gone since last I had heard her voice. So firmly did my dread fasten itself upon me that I turned to my companion, and said tremblingly:

“ Lead me to her, Sandy; you know the way; I must see her at once.”

We quickened our footsteps, passing across courtyard and square till we reached the interior of the

old fortress; then through the winding corridor, whose floors I had traversed when the great darkness had shut out the whole world from me. Suddenly Sandy stopped, and pointing to a door, said: "She is in there; knock, and she will know ye."

I struck the door loudly, forgetting that such clamor would frighten more than attract; but quickly undid the harm by calling impulsively:

"Priscilla! Priscilla! Cousin Priscilla!"

There was no response, and I knocked louder; then shoved in the door. There was no resistance to my shove; and inside I saw disorder everywhere. Struggle of some kind there had been; and a hasty exit. Had the worst happened?

"Sandy," I asked fiercely, "where is she?"

There was anger in my voice, but it was not directed toward my companion; for when he answered I knew he spoke honestly, but to little purpose.

"I know nothin' more; she was here when I left."

That only added fuel to the fire that was burning within me; and I flung myself out of the room, saying between set teeth:

"Come, we must find her! We must find her!"

From one room to another we hurried, searching strange recesses and gloomy corridors; but nowhere could we find signs of her. I shouted madly her name, recklessly defying those who might have been about. 'Twas after all rooms had been explored that we returned to the first again, and with close detail I studied the different articles

scattered around. There had been a violent struggle; but murder may have been avoided.

"Sandy, she is not here," I said, leaping from the floor where I had squatted in despair; "she's down there. We must find her, or kill the man who has harmed her."

There was ready response in my companion's eyes; and together we hurried down the path to the beach below. I led, pushing out into the blackness of the night in feverish haste; and like a madman I muttered to myself dire threats. But the cool night air breathed calmness into my brain; so when I stopped, panting on the beach, I knew that I had need of caution and clearness of vision. Before us the bright lights were burning on the sands, around which reeled the drunken pirates, celebrating their latest victory with song and dance. Sandy stood by my side; the two of us watched the scene a moment, fascinated by the shadows that played around the fire. Were we any match for that horde of vile creatures, not one of whom would hesitate to destroy us?

With quietness in my voice, I said: "Sandy, somewhere in that crowd is a man who knows where my cousin is; that man we must find. There is danger ahead now; you can choose again; 'tis too much to ask of any man to follow me in there."

"I ain't never yet stopped at danger," he muttered bravely, "an' I guess I can stick it out as long as ye can. I'll follow ye where ye lead."

"All right!" replied I, in a whisper; "'tis for

now and eternity. For this, I forgive you all—and I pray God will do the same!”

Then turning full upon him, I added: “But we will leave Sandy, the pirate, here for evermore. Hereafter you must be John Wooster—the rightful hero of my boyish dreams. ’Tis John, as your mother knew you; and not Sandy, as the pirates call you.”

There was a new chord touched in his nature; and for the lack of better ways to conceal it he broke forth; “Damn me fur a coward! I’ll kill every soul of ’em if they touch ye or her head.”

I knew we would need all of this spirit of daring ere we could rescue Priscilla from her captors; and the words reinforced my own resolutions. We strode down the beach into the full light of the fires, and walked unchallenged into the midst of the assembled pirates. There were rude stares and exclamations; but none offered opposition. With cool attention to our business we passed from one circle to another, brushing carelessly against those who stood in our way; once even tumbling a drunken brute over on his head, so persistent was he in delaying our progress.

With eyes aflame and eager to see the one I loved, I strode on, careless of the result of my actions, till suddenly a new joy leaped into my heart. There, not a dozen yards away, surrounded by a circle of pirates, stood Priscilla; her head erect and proud, her eyes flashing with defiant anger. Two brutes faced her, speaking words that I could not divine.

'Twas them, I judged, I would hold guilty for dragging her from her room in the old fortress; even though 'twas a drunken spree it deserved punishment.

I stepped forward more eagerly; yet with coolness of brain and collected thoughts. I knew the temper of the men I would deal with; they were the same I had faced twice before—once indeed with little knowledge of their ways and moods. Now I had clear vision; their movements I could divine; and my sword could play to good effect.

Reaching the circle, I pushed rudely through it, saying in a voice that had a commanding ring:

“So this is the way you treat your captain; you dare enter his fortress, and rob him of one he has sworn to protect from your insolence! 'Twill be a fine punishment he will hold in store for you!”

There were a score of eyes turned upon me; leering, bloodshot, bloodthirsty eyes. I quailed not before them, but continued:

“I come from him to mark the thief; and to return the stolen. The punishment shall be according to his naming.”

I had reached Priscilla's side; but I dared not lay hands on her; 'twould have spoilt the game. Even then the men recovered from their surprise, and one exclaimed angrily:

“Damn me! 'tis that fellow that killed Silver Dick and stuck Grizzly Mike! Where did he cum from? Didn't the capt'n kill him?”

For reply, I turned from the ugly, scarred face to

John Wooster, and for the last time called him by his false name :

“Sandy, obey your captain’s orders ; take this prisoner back to him ; I’ll deal with this man.”

Drawing my sword from its sheath, while Sandy put hand upon Priscilla, I added, turning to the man who would defy me :

“Now if you would defy your captain’s orders, we will settle it here ; I strike in his name.”

I held the blade threateningly toward the man, half raised for action ; his nearest companion drew his, too, and I saw I had the pair to fight. “So be it,” I spoke ; “’twill be quicker work to kill you together than separately.”

Remembrances of the duel with Grizzly Mike and Silver Dick must have occurred to them ; for after the first bold show of defiance, they wavered. I approached them a step, saying sharply :

“Guard yourself, if you wish a fair fight !”

But they were for retreating ; they lowered their swords, and slunk back into the circle of dark forms. Then seeing that Sandy had made good his escape from the crowd, leading Priscilla by the arm, I turned, and walked away, speaking sneeringly to those around :

“’Twill be a sad day for him who steals the captain’s prisoner again. I leave you this warning ; ’twill be this sword that will run him through.”

None interposed objection ; and through the lane of sullen, scowling faces I passed. Their resentment, I knew, would be short : for the pleasures of

the feast were already deep within their hearts and blood. Even as I reached the outskirts of the crowd, some had dismissed it from mind, and had returned to their drinking. Only two, I thought, would carry feelings further; they had slunk away, and were not to be seen. 'Twas with hopes of finding them again that I made my way around the crowd to the point where I knew Sandy would await me.

Faithful Sandy; nay, John Wooster—as he shall henceforth be—stood near the water's edge, with fair Priscilla by his side. In the eagerness to meet her again, I forgot my enemies, hurrying forward to say: "Cousin Priscilla! We are safe at last! 'Tis escape now or never! I'll lead you away again; and none shall take us alive! I swear that! I shall die ere they separate us!"

She put her hand on my arm; 'twas trembling with fear or emotion. I stroked the fair skin, and added:

"'Tis fearful adventure for one so fair and frail to meet; my heart bleeds for you. But we may soon be away from it all."

"'Tis not that, Cousin Allin," said she softly; "I mind that less now; I always longed for adventure. 'Tis you I was thinking of."

She hesitated, holding low the lashes that shielded the eyes. I would have burst forth passionately, so great was my love, but out of the darkness near us came a sharp whistle. 'Twas the last; for a scuffle followed; and I knew that faithful John had silenced the man forever. But there was another; and the

battle would have gone hard with him had I not hurried to the scene.

They were the two who had drawn swords upon me in the circle of pirates; now they had paid for their resentment with their own blood. John rose from the beach, stained with blood, but not that from his own veins.

"They followed ye down here," he explained; "'twas like 'em; I had a grudge against 'em that's wiped out now. 'Twill make me feel better. But we need to hurry; the night is passin'."

I returned to Priscilla, touching her hand reassuringly, and speaking with calmness: "We must leave this island to-night in an open boat; 'twill be a voyage of hardships and sufferings, Priscilla; but there is no choice. 'Tis across the sea we must go—you and I, and John."

"Wherever you direct, Cousin Allin, I go; 'twill be better than another night here."

There was much preparation to make; boat to secure and launch; and provisions and water to provide. All this was easily arranged, for John knew every part of the island, and how best to secure needful things. Alone I would have made a poor showing, so ignorant was I of the resources of the place. With Priscilla I watched the pirates on the beach till John returned, and said:

"The boat is ready, an' 'twill be well to start early. The wind is fair, an' blowin' out to sea. We should make many miles before mornin'."

"We are ready and eager to go, John," answered

I quickly ; " this island has no attachment for us ; 'twill give us no pain to leave it."

" No ; but joy—great joy," murmured Priscilla.

I helped her into the boat, stowing her away snugly in the bows, where cloaks and sail-cloth protected her from the night's dew.

" There you can rest and sleep for the night," I said ; "'tis peace now ; for danger is past."

" Sit here with me, Allin," she said softly, and with timid voice ; " the night is young yet ; the moon will soon be up ; and the air is warm and pleasant. I would have you here by my side."

Sandy took the tiller and sheet-rope, while I sat near the bow, watching with Priscilla the beach fade into the gloom of the night. 'Twas a fair and beautiful night ; warm and balmy with the tropical breath of spring ; with fragrance of flowers and hum of insects drifting to us from the wooded shores. The rippling water murmured sweet cadences into our ears ; humming some tune and lullaby that made fresh the memories of other days. The great solemn night brooded over cove and island ; and the silence stirred pleasant thoughts within the mind ; 'twas too entrancing to break with words. So we sat together in the bow of the boat, dreaming and thinking, forgetting the realities of the dangers just passed, and scarce planning for the future.

Out of the cove we passed in dreamy pleasure ; our silent boatmen guiding and directing the craft without word or exclamation. We watched the receding shores ; and in the darkness our hands touched,

carrying mutual message of happiness. Then the moon came up, flooding the ocean with its white light; and bathing us with its brightness. In its rays there was added mystery to the message in our eyes; 'twas as though a miracle had been performed. Under its spell we gazed a moment; then shut out the joy that seemed too great to stand, and again watched the waters that rippled around us. Midnight was now upon us; and the boundless sea stretched ahead; its waves rolling in long swells which carried us swiftly from the island where so much pain and fear had been ours.

XXXIII.

CAST ADRIFT.

MORNING dawned bright and clear, with the spell of the tropical climate still strong over all nature, lulling senses to pleasant repose, and banishing thoughts of danger. The mists of the ocean rose with the sun, obscuring its rays by a sheeny veil that hung suspended in mid-air till sudden warmth dispelled it; melting it away as thin vapor without form or substance. There was salty odor in the air,—rich and tonic in its breath,—swept up by spray and foam that dashed lengthwise of our boat, and broke in a thousand watery fragments. The wind blew soft and gentle, wafting us steadily onward in our course.

We had slept little through the quietness of the night; but the rest had brought us refreshment, and I relieved John at the tiller as the sun burst above the misty line of the horizon. Priscilla had found slumber toward morning; but now she lay, wrapped in her blankets, watching the changes in the scene, forgetful of all else.

'Twas John who scanned the horizon for sign of shore or sail; not heeding the mysterious creation of

another day on the sea, which so absorbed our thoughts. Following his practical gaze, I vainly sought to make out sign of shore or craft. 'Twas all blank; the horizon sea-bound and encompassed by the watery waste; white-capped waves rising and falling to meet sky and clouds. Still I asked, confirming my beliefs by John's words:

"Can you see island or ship, John?"

He shook his head negatively, answering slowly:

"No; we have left the island far astern, an' no ships would be in this latitude. We must steer north to strike their path; 'tis seldom they cum this way."

"Except when towed by the *Black Racer*," I answered with a smile; "then they come unwillingly."

"Yes; many's the ship that's cum this way to her doom; an' I helped them to their destruction."

There was a mournful note in the voice; a brooding strain of repentance. I knew 'twas a different man who stood before me; one who felt the burden of his crimes, and was heavy-hearted with them. So I answered lightly, hoping to cheer him:

"We'll leave all thoughts of that behind; 'tis all like a dream; we must forget it."

Though silent at this, the heavy look still hung over the scarred face, and for days thereafter we could not lift it. Priscilla joined with me to stir hope within his breast; not even shutting him out from our talk, which we would have turned to mutual memories and associations. Long hours John guided the boat, silently and impassively watching the

waters ahead, finding little interest in aught else. Time grew heavy on our hands, and I would force him to rest; but he was slow to avail himself of the opportunity.

Provisions we had a-plenty; and we feasted with little thought of the morrow. With fine disregard of comfort, Priscilla met the emergency cheerfully, scarce complaining when the seas ran high and wet her through. The little boat labored heavily in the swells, beaten into greater unrest by the increasing wind; then clouds shut out the heavens, and two gray days and nights followed. Our spirits grew heavier under the touch of darkened sky and coldly-tossing, restless sea, which moaned its dismal song in solemn cadence.

The wind changed its course on the fifth day, and brought blacker clouds up from the horizon, sweeping them across the heavens with great swiftness. The air grew hot and cold by turns; portending danger that none knew better than our silent boatman. Yet he spoke no words of fear to us; leaving us to find our pleasure as we might, watching and studying the narrow world around.

When the air grew cold and threatening, I wrapped Priscilla in the warm cloak that John had provided for her; carefully shielding her from the biting wind, which every hour increased in power. "'Tis all we can do for you, Cousin Priscilla," I said; "but soon we may find help; then we can give you more comfort."

She spoke quickly in reply, smiling sadly as she

said: "I want nothing more than what you have. Have you not suffered? Then can I not endure a little too?"

"'Tis not right that you should, Cousin Priscilla; man was born to fight and suffer; but woman to enjoy."

"Fie on you, Cousin Allin! That's not what I believe. Dost think I came to sea to find comfort?"

"Why did you come? You have not told me. 'Twas strange that you should sail from Boston with Captain Packer. I thought at first it must be Edith. You remember how I spoke to you first, thinking that you were Edith?"

"Yes; I remember," she answered slowly, with eyes downcast. "She was on your mind." Then looking up, with fine color in her cheeks: "But Edith is Captain Packer's wife. Did I tell you?"

"No; you did not," I answered quietly; "then I am glad; she will be happy."

"And you?"

There was inquiry in her voice, which I did not understand, and I repeated; "And I?" Then seeming to read something in her eyes, I was led to say fervently: "Yes! I am happy; very happy! How could I be else?"

She looked away from me, gazing across the angry waves, and then asked: "Is there danger, Cousin Allin? Will these waves swamp us? They seem terribly high and rough. Once I thought I would find delight in riding over them; but now—now—'tis no time to die; I wish to live!"

Our eyes met; I would have held them forever in

that gaze, so great was my love ; but the seas rushed wildly over the boat, and drenched us. The danger was increasing ; even John's face was worried and drawn. 'Twas not his crimes now that made serious his looks ; but concern over the situation.

"The storm will be upon us by night, will it not ?" I asked.

For reply he pointed ahead, and muttered : "'Tis upon us now !"

With sudden energy the sea rose in a wall of foam beyond us ; roared with deafening crashes against the frail boat, and the wind swept mast and sail away with fearful shrieking. Then there came a lull ; John sprang to bail out the boat ; and I to help him, calling Priscilla to stay by me. She did not cry out, but seizing one of the buckets worked steadily by my side. As fast as the great waves filled the wrecked boat, we bailed it out, working with feverish energy, uttering neither word or cry. White in the vivid flashes of lightning, Priscilla was still calm and self-possessed, ready to follow our lead. Once indeed the end seemed at hand, the boat lurching under its load of green water and foam ; but John raised the barrel of drinking water, and flung it overboard.

"'Tis our only hope," he groaned.

Then lightened somewhat by this, the boat steadied itself, and we gained on the water. There was still another chance ; and we worked for it. The storm muffled its fury for a season ; and then crashed out again with redoubled energy ; but it seemed to retreat, and break around and not upon us.

"'Tis passing ; 'tis passing !" I shouted, noting the gradual change.

"Yes ; the worst is over," John replied.

With renewed hope we worked, bailing now with the consciousness that safety was within our grasp. The stout boat—though without mast or sail or rudder—was still intact. The angry sea fell quickly after the storm ; and we finally flung down our buckets. Then John said :

"The rain has stopped ; 'tis too bad."

"Why so ? Have we not had rain enough ? We're soaked to the skin now."

"But we'll soon need the rain ; we have no drinking water."

I did not understand the full meaning of this ; not till hours later, when thirst began to parch lips and tongue, and there was no water to drink. We slept the night through in fitful repose, changing our watches often, and ever keeping an anxious eye on the sea and sky. When morning broke we felt the discomfort of thirst. There were a few drops of rain water in the bucket, caught accidentally from the last shower.

Eagerly we drank of this, dividing it sparingly, and wondering where our next supply would come from. If the lowering clouds would only send a shower we might collect sufficient to last a few days.

But the clouds gradually drifted away, permitting the sun once more to shine full upon the sea, drying everything in its path, and licking up moisture from our boat and clothes with eager thirst. It grew warm and sultry by noon, intensifying our longing

for water ; parching tongue and lips till they appeared stiff and swollen.

Vainly we scanned the horizon, trusting that some passing ship would show itself, bringing us the relief that must soon come ; our hopes were measured by hours, and not by days. Madness from thirst would seize us before another day could pass ; and then 'twere better that we had never been born. Priscilla read our fate in the stern, set features of John, who now grew more morbid and gloomy. I would not yield to the depression ; my prison life in the subterranean cavern had made suffering less poignant to me ; but for the one I loved my heart bled. I sat by her side, watching the paleness of her face ; stern and defiant yet, but with weakening resolution showing. 'Twas a pitiful sight ; yet for sheer courage there was no murmur — nothing but silent resolve.

The hours of the new day dragged wearily along ; the thirst grew maddening ; our tongues became swollen, and speech almost impossible. John sat in the stern, holding hard to the new tiller he had rigged ; and ever and anon turning his eyes from his ragged sail to where the western sun was approaching the horizon. For long time no speech had passed our lips. Then suddenly the single eye of our silent boatman burned with a feverish glow ; it glared with such fierce resolve that I raised my head inquiringly. Then I knew that some horrible idea had formed itself in his brain ; and when he withdrew his hand from his cloak I was not surprised. 'Twas an ugly

sheath knife he held clenched in his hand. The furtive eye still glowed at us; the madman, I thought, was staring out of it; but I was prepared.

When he moved, slowly and stealthily, raising the knife to clearer view, I made ready to spring at him, knowing well that one of us would be his victim if taken by surprise. Then before he could make the attack, I moved swiftly toward him, keeping eyes well on the knife. He raised it suddenly, and, as if divining my thoughts, would have plunged it into his throat.

I wrested it from his grasp, holding him as if he had been a child; but there was no madness in the eyes or voice, and when he spoke 'twas thus:

"'Twill save ye a few days longer; let me do it. My blood will save her; she must drink of it, or she'll perish before morning."

We glared into each other's eyes; the temptation was great. For Priscilla's sake I might do it; but—I threw the temptation off, and hurled the knife far into the sea lest it should tempt me again.

"We'll die together, John," I groaned. "'Twill do no good to do that; 'tis our fate."

He was not satisfied; but he held no other weapon, and I returned to my seat. Priscilla was resting, with eyes closed, and unconscious of it all. Her fair face was pinched with suffering; it made wild thoughts run riot in my veins. John was right; we could keep life in her with our own blood; then mayhap a kind Providence would send her help. 'Twas not madness; not if it saved her.

With keen purpose and intent, I picked up a bucket ; held it before John, saying : “ Then ’tis my turn first ; open the vein here ; ’twill give enough life for the night.”

With bared arm, I held my sword toward him, bidding him to cut ; holding the bucket meanwhile to catch the precious drops. He shrunk back ; then made a motion as if to grasp the sword and turn its point upon himself. I struck it upward, and spoke commandingly :

“ Do as I bid you ; ’tis my order ; and I shall be obeyed.”

The dusk of evening was around us ; but through the dim light we could read the grim resolve in each other’s eyes : neither would yield. Yet being the stronger of the two, I made him flinch under my fierce gaze ; his eye fell before mine, and then wandered across the water. As I looked a new light seemed to dawn in it ; the madness that had made it horrible was gone. Suddenly he raised a hand and pointed, gurgling with parched tongue and swollen throat :

“ See ! ’Tis a sail ; or am I mad ? ”

Turning quickly, I saw the white patch against the gray and black of the sky. ’Twas a sail,—not a mile away,—and coming toward us. With unloosened tongue, we shouted and waved till response came from the ship—even Priscilla waking and joining in the outcry. Then faintness seized us, and we yielded to great weakness, becoming dumb and helpless.

XXXIV.

THE LONG FIGHT AND CHASE.

DARKNESS spread over the sea, and came near to shutting us from view before the sail bore down upon us and boat could be launched to pick us up. Not knowing what our rescuers might be—so dim was the light—I fought off the faintness that had made us weak, and held one arm out to support Priscilla, and, if need be, to protect her from any worse danger than the sea. Not again would she fall among pirates and cut-throats ; 'twere better to end it all with my own sword. With this resolve in mind, I held her closely, looking oft into the white face and weary eyes till I grew mad with anxiety.

The ship seemed like a goodly clipper, built for peaceful trading, and not for war. Yet when we first stepped on deck my heart misgave me ; 'twas a crew that no trader would carry. There were four score and ten gathered on the deck, and armed for war, and not for peace. The black muzzle of guns peeped from under tarpaulin and cordage that had been spread out to conceal them ; 'twas another trick of the high seas. Not even the *Black Racer* ever showed fiercer teeth than this strange craft, which we now found ourselves on, and for a moment I

stood immovable. To the words of our rescuers I made no reply ; but, whispering to Priscilla, said :

“ ’Tis another cursed pirate ; they have deceived us again. ’Tis easier to kill you, Priscilla, than let them take you prisoner. ’Twill be over in a minute ; then we can find peace. Dost agree, fair cousin ? ”

I held hand on sword hilt, ready to draw it and strike ; and had any placed hands on us, I should have acted without her consent. But the crew stood off, while from the cabin appeared their captain. I had no eyes for him, but waited on Priscilla’s word.

“ Speak, Cousin Priscilla, before they part us ; I cannot leave you again ; nay, I shall not—not even with your consent.”

I spoke fiercely, and in the dim light of the deck I thought she consented ; but when I looked into her eyes again they were smiling. Then she said : “ Don’t you see, Cousin Allin ? Hast gone blind again ? Look!—not at me—but at him—the captain ! ”

Following her gaze, I stood as if blinded and dazed ; did my eyes deceive, or was I looking sanely and intelligently ? Before me in flesh stood Captain Packer, with hands extended and smile on lips. I would have released Priscilla and grasped his hands in mine, but from sheer joy and relief she grew suddenly helpless, and nearly swooned in my arms.

“ ’Tis a happy rescue,” I heard Captain Packer saying—“ a happy rescue : another night and day ’twould have been too late.”

“Yes; too late!” I murmured. Then remembering our sufferings, I cried: “Water! Bring her water! See, she’s dying for it; none has passed her lips for forty-eight hours.”

“And yours? How long since did you drink?” I heard Captain Packer ask, as he held the cup of cooling drink to Priscilla’s parched lips.

“Does not matter, so long as she has it,” I laughed; but when she was satisfied I took the proffered cup and drained it. “’Tis Boston water; and never did it taste better.”

John was also helped on deck; but he would not drink till we had satisfied our thirst. Then with trembling limbs we staggered to quarters below, and slept till the sun was well up in the heavens on the morrow.

A most fortunate rescue it was—most fortunate for many reasons! When I reached deck the following morning, I would have asked the meaning of the large crew; but another sail coming toward us made me exclaim:

“What sail is that?—’tis no trader!”

“No; ’tis our consort,” answered Captain Packer, who had joined me. “She carries six guns and a crew of eighty.”

“But you?—why have you such a crew?” I asked in bewilderment.

“’Tis only a trick to find the pirates. We’re a peaceful trader, but we can bite.”

I saw the meaning of it all, then exclaimed eagerly:

"'Tis well we met you ; I can lead you to the pirates' headquarters."

"We're bound there now fast as sail can carry us."

"But how do you know its latitude?" I asked, sorely puzzled at the man's confidence. He smiled, pointed to the wheel, and said :

"We trusted your friend ; he said he could steer us to the island. Is it so?"

I looked astern ; and saw John, stern and forbidding, guiding the armed trader across the southern seas ; headed, I knew, for the island which we had so recently deserted. I replied simply :

"He can do it better than I ; leave all to him ; he can be trusted."

Followed by our heavily armed consort, we sailed steadily southward all that day and night, John scarcely leaving his post of duty long enough to eat and rest. To him 'twas a duty that would help to wipe out many of his crimes. He knew the waters about, as I knew the streets of Boston, and never once did he vary the course of his ship. He had no word for sailors or officers, but stood immovable and silent by his post, his feverish eye looking steadily into the distance till one day his features relaxed, and he said :

"'Tis the headland ; there on the port side ! 'Twill take us half a day to run in !"

There was commotion on deck then ; the men were piped to their quarters. Guns were uncovered—for there was no further need of deception ; ammunition passed around ; weapons cleaned and pol-

ished ; signals exchanged with our consort. Captain Packer looked to everything, cautioning his men to do their duty with a vengeance. We hove to a mile off the headland till our consort came up ; then abreast we sailed straight for the entrance to the cove.

None felt the excitement of the approaching conflict more than I, yet there was nervousness in mind and heart. A fighting ship was no place for Priscilla. A dozen times I went below decks to caution her to stay out of sight, promising her assistance should danger befall the ship. In the event of my death, Captain Packer promised to save her should the ship take fire or sink ; and John I knew was like a faithful bloodhound, ready to die for either.

So 'twas with an easier heart that I took my post on the forward deck, eager to lead the first landing or boarding party. I knew 'twould strike terror into the hearts of many of the pirates to find me heading an attack, followed by such a redoubtable crew. Then, too, I was not sure but I would face Long Jim again in fair battle. A miracle might have saved him from death on the rocks.

The headland hid us from view for another hour ; then suddenly taking advantage of current and wind we moved our course so that the full width and expanse of the cove hove in view. 'Twas a glorious view, such as few of the men had ever seen before. The water was bright and silvery in the sun ; the green of hills and mountains in strong contrast to the white beach of the basin's rim.

There were two ships in the cove—the *Black Racer* and another. 'Twas a fine trap, and our prey could not escape us. On the beach all was quiet, and none had suspected the danger. Not till we stood in full view for half an hour, steadily approaching the upper end of the bay, did commotion on shore and pirate ship show signs of excitement and consternation. Then 'twas that small boats swarmed in the water, loaded with pirates intent upon reaching one of their ships; all preferring to fight on deck rather than on land. We could hear the pipings of the quartermaster, the shouts of commands, and the cries of angry men who had been surprised in their idleness.

"'Tis better to make it easy for our men," said Captain Packer, addressing me; "it may seem like murder, but they are not human beings. I hate to lose a single man in killing such scum."

"What would you do?" I asked, not divining his meaning.

"Rake the small boats before they can reach the ships."

"Does seem like murder; but they'd do it. We can't show mercy."

Then he ordered his gunners to measure the distance, and a moment later our guns belched forth shot and flame. The shots shrieked and whistled through the air, tearing up the sands of the distant beach, and burying themselves in the water. It took another round of shot for the gunners to get the measure; then they plowed up the swarming

boat-loads of pirates with true aim, shattering heavy timber into splinters, and casting their burdens into the sea. There were dull shouts and curses, fierce commands and ravings, and all the wild carnage of war. 'Twould have been sickening, if not in so just a cause; yet withal it made me turn away. There was lacking the excitement of action and participation in the battle. I liked not such long range fighting; but when the guns of the *Black Racer* responded, and I saw a seaman beheaded by a well-directed shot not a yard from me, I grew hot with passion, and cheered every broadside we hurled straight into the enemy's ship. Their blood now had to wipe out the stains of many a murder. With terrific crash and roar, the guns of our consort blended with those from our deck. Shot and shell were hurtling through the air in thick clouds, the smoke soon obscuring the bright rays of the sun.

The guns of the second pirate ship then joined in the fierce battle, adding another key to the sounds that echoed and reechoed among the hills. The pirates succeeded in raising anchor; and the sails catching the wind swung the two boats around so they could work their guns better. 'Twas to be a desperate fight; that we knew, for the pirates were heavily armed, and their guns were a match for ours.

Our heavier consort brought broadside after broadside to bear upon the nearest pirate ship, and, steadily narrowing the range, she buried tons of iron and steel into her hull, literally driving her back-

ward toward the sandy beach. The *Black Racer*—swifter of foot than her companion—gained more headway, and bore down upon us, fighting desperately foot by foot for the entrance to the bay.

“Head her off, captain!” I shouted, seeing her object, “or she’ll escape out to sea.”

“We’ll head her off with our guns and board her; she’ll never escape this time.”

Yet with stately speed and pride the pirate ship swung into the tide, and surged steadily forward. John, who had relinquished the wheel, suddenly sprang forward, and said :

“Let me have it; she’s goin’ through the narrow cut ; she’ll get away.”

The helmsman was slow to yield his position ; but Captain Packersaw the point, and handed the mastery of the ship over to John. He changed her course, swung her around so that we ran parallel with the pirate. Broadside after broadside we exchanged as we ran this race, crashing down sails and rigging, and tearing up decks and bulwarks till the bay seemed full of broken timbers.

Above the fearful carnage there came a cheer from behind : we turned to see our consort finishing the other pirate ; boarding her as she lay helpless on the sand-bar, battered and burning in a dozen places.

“’Tis her punishment : now for the other one !” said I grimly, turning eyes once more to the *Black Racer*.

She was a noble ship ; swift as the eagle in flight, and stately as a condor in her movements. She

glided ahead of us, despite torn sails and rigging ; gaining in the race till every man aboard our ship groaned in spirit. John only kept silent—grimly, fearfully silent—urging his ship onward through cross currents and tides till it seemed as if the very elements favored him.

“Bring her down ! Cripple her ! Such shooting ! Aim higher ! There, that is better !” Thus shouted the officers to gunners who were sweating and smoking with exertion. Never did guns point straighter, nor did shot and shell ever shriek and explode with greater precision ; yet despite it all the pirate glided onward, careless of wrecked sails and masts, and making straight for the narrow cut.

This none knew save John. 'Twas as if the two ships were headed straight for the mountains ; both determined to run ashore on the strand. We looked in amazement at this strange spectacle, and Captain Packer said :

“They must be sinking, and intend to run ashore to fight it out there.”

But John knew differently ; to him 'twas all so plain that he wondered at our words, nor suffered himself to make reply. Then suddenly between the hills ahead a steep valley appeared, and between it ran a narrow, deep-flowing stream ; beyond it we saw the coral reefs, and back of them the deep blue of the ocean.

“'Tis there they are going !” we shouted.

“Yes,” answered I grimly ; “and they think we can't follow them. If we do the coral reef or rocks

await us; but one of their best pilots guides us. None on their ship knows the coast better."

Thus it was that John fought hard to reach the channel first. As if by mutual consent guns were quieted now, and all watched the race. There was excitement enough in this, and hearts beat quickly. The *Black Racer* continued to draw ahead, and John manœuvered his boat so well that we gained nearly all we lost. Yet there was a difference; speed could not be forever balanced by tricks and skilled seamanship. In time the *Black Racer* forged into the narrow channel between the hills—a hundred yards ahead of us. In anger at this escape our gunners once more opened fire, pouring their shot in terrific showers into the hull and rigging of the pirate at such short range that the smoke almost enveloped both vessels. The *Black Racer* trembled and heeled at this cannonade; and for a moment it seemed as if she would careen over on the rocks which guarded either side of the channel.

Then she righted herself; and caught in the swift current that was setting seaward, she seemed fairly to draw away from us by magic. There were groans and hoarse commands around, and wild cheers ahead. They thought now to draw us to our doom; so over stern and sides they gazed with exultant eyes. But John knew his chart well; better in fact than those ahead. We followed swiftly into the narrow stream, hanging determinedly upon the heels of the enemy; barking ever and anon with a hastily-rigged bow-chaser.

Through the deep cut in the mountains we passed ; then out into a broad bay, surrounded on three sides by coral reefs and rocks, with the surf pounding in sullen roar across the obstructions. We rounded the last point of headland ; and a sheer rocky cliff towered five hundred feet above us. With a smothered exclamation of wonder and surprise, I gazed at this sudden transformation. Before me was the precipice which I had so toilsomely climbed after escape from the subterranean prison.

Moving swiftly toward the stern, I spoke thus, addressing John : “ ’Tis where we fought ! See the summit ! ”

John nearly dropped the wheel, so interested was he ; and with shaded eyes we stared at the cliff, forgetting the pirate ship ahead. As we drew abreast of it, the ledge where Long Jim had buried his treasures loomed up ; around it circled the two huge vultures, staring with eager eyes at the heap of bones. John whispered hoarsely :

“ Where is the capt’n ?—has he escaped ? ”

“ I see him not ; he is not there,” I answered. Then suddenly, with a shudder, I cried hoarsely : “ Look ! What is it ?—dangling from the rope ! ”

’Twas a sight sufficient to quail the stoutest heart ; yet for a moment we gazed in greedy delight. Hanging from the rope, which had caught in the stunted trees of a cleft in the precipice, was a strange unearthly creature, grinning with fearful face at us. Fifty feet above the surface of the sea it swung—a human skeleton, stripped of its flesh, yet so fresh that

the blood had not yet dried on the bones. Every passing breeze rattled the bones horribly against the rocks, and the vultures from above circled downward, and looked at their victim. But they had done their work well, and only whitening bones, hung together by a few strips of muscles and tendons, were left.

"'Tis the capt'n," muttered John, crossing himself; "'tis him! 'tis him!"

Then he turned to his work with brighter face, following the pirate ship with an expression that knew no defeat. When I turned, sick and disgusted at the sight, I found Priscilla standing by my side; she, too, had seen the dangling skeleton. Her face was white with horror; yet she whispered: "Who is it? I know nothing of this, Cousin Allin!"

"'Tis Long Jim!" I said feebly. "He has expiated his sins at last! 'Tis a fearful death; but he deserved it all. Come, we must not look at it."

I led her away, and in the cabin told her of that lonely swim from the bowels of the earth; of the terrible climb up the steep precipice; of the strange sight I saw at the summit, and of the fight and tragedy that none but John and I knew.

XXXV.

THE RACE OVER, PRISCILLA TELLS HER TALE.

WHEN next I appeared on deck the coral reefs were near; our pilot seemed to be running our craft straight upon them, so steadily did he point her bow away from the rocky precipice. Yet through their treacherous line there was a clear passageway—a channel which none save the pirates knew. The *Black Racer* had already cleared the reefs and was standing out to sea; but the chase was not yet over. With muzzled guns we passed through the dangerous reef, John holding the ship steady, not daring to look behind. 'Twas a narrow way, and death yawned on either side. The pirates ahead looked in vain for us to dash upon the jagged coral rock; but we cleared the space, and sailed out into the ocean.

Then began the duel again, and the stern chase, which lasted for days and nights. Captain Packer was not easily discouraged, nor thrown off the track of the enemy. Not until all signs of the pirate had faded from view would the chase be relinquished. With more guns trained over the bow, we steadily hurled shot and shell at the escaping craft, trusting that a lucky shot might permanently disable her. From the *Black Racer's* stern occasionally puffed a

small gun, whose shot always buried itself into the sea before it reached our side. 'Twas a fitful and unsatisfactory cannonade at the best, and we soon lost interest in it.

Yet the race was never abandoned; some hearts were faint and weak; but there was hope in the minds of most that all would end well if we but doggedly hung on the trail of the ship. When night came on the pirate changed her course; but instead of distancing us in the darkness she ran closer to our port side. A few hours after dawn we sought again to cripple her, and the silent depths of the ocean reverberated with the roar of big guns.

"'Twill be a long race, but we'll have her yet," said Captain Packer, when again the pirate slowly crept away from us, crippled more this time, but still able to sail swiftly. "She has no harbor to go to; and we'll hunt her down till we have her."

John, standing by, heard this, and nodded his head violently, muttering: "'Tis so; she can't escape; we'll catch her."

Thus hope kept us up, day by day, till the fateful hour. Then came the meeting of stern enemies, and the long reckoning. 'Twas on the third day that heavy fog lifted itself suddenly from the ocean, and made glad every heart. Not half a mile away, heading toward us, was the pirate; in the white blanket she had altered her course only to find that she had been steering across our bows. 'Twas mutual surprise; and for some moments consternation absorbed all other thoughts. Then the *Black Racer*

swung around to point away from us, and our guns opened fire in the final duel. There was some sharp sailing for position; then the top-mast of the pirate tumbled to the deck, and her great sail fell outward. She stopped and careened under the force of the heavy broadside, and a score of sailors rushed to cut away the dragging sail.

Frightened and crippled, the ship now staggered unevenly through the water, making but little headway, while our good ship drew upon her rapidly.

"'Tis our prize now!" shouted John exultantly, drawing sword, and preparing to follow me.

"You're right, John," I answered; "she can't escape."

Seeing that she could no longer sail, her captain decided to fight, and all hands were turned to the guns. The fiercest duel of the race then began. Like black demons the men fought, gunners loading and shooting till their muzzles blackened each other's portholes. Closer and closer drifted the two boats, and louder screamed and roared the heavy explosives. Blood ran in riotous streams from deck to deck, and splashed in pools into the sea. Men were beheaded and torn to pieces by showers of shot that raked the decks. Yet greater was the execution on board the pirate. Half their guns were dismantled, and the others had few gunners left to work them. From the mast-head still flaunted defiantly the black flag.

Once in the lull of the conflict Captain Packer shouted above the noise, asking if they surrendered; for reply he received another broadside from three

guns. Then we dismantled her with well-directed aim, raking decks and hull with heavy shot till there seemed nothing left to aim at. John suddenly seized the wheel, and swung the boats together with a crash ; in an instant a dozen hardy seamen followed me on board the pirate. But no enemy faced us. There was death and carnage around ; dearly had the pirates paid for their crimes. One or two raised themselves on their elbows and cursed us, but none offered opposition. In the cabin we found half a dozen cowering in fright, and ready to surrender. These we secured and marched aboard our ship.

Thus ended the long race and the fierce sea fight. 'Twas a tragedy that needs little dwelling upon. When the last prisoner was secured, I hurried below decks, anxious lest stray shots had crashed into Priscilla's cabin. But her smiling face met mine ; pale and sorrowful at the awful scene around, but brave and courageous.

" 'Tis now my turn," she said ; " these brave men need a woman's care. 'Tis my duty to nurse them."

I did not deter her ; but 'twas a dreadful sight on deck, and Priscilla had need of all her courage to meet it. Then her fine spirit came to her rescue ; and she walked amidst the headless corpses with firm and fearless eyes. The dead were past helping—horrible in their bloodless stare, with limbs and faces drawn and twisted in the death agony ; the wounded were within our charge, and waiting for the nursing hand of friend and surgeon.

As we gathered them up from the slippery deck,

Priscilla spoke kindly to them, soothed them with touch and word, and made easy their sufferings with her rare presence of mind. Men, shot and disfigured, blessed her ; dying wretches called for her last words of peace, and held her hand while they passed away ; the uninjured looked on with eyes and lips a-tremble with emotion. 'Twas a scene not to be forgotten !

For two days we lay-to on the ocean, cleaning the decks of the two ships of the dead and injured, and replacing broken spars and sails with new. Neither ship was in a sinking condition, so we rigged the *Black Racer* up, and prepared her for the trip to Boston. She was a prize worth securing.

On the third day a sail appeared out of the southern horizon, and our consort loomed up, bringing with her the treasures of the pirate's island, and the story of the final tragedy. The last of the wretches had been put to the sword or were imprisoned in the ship's hold. The fight on shore had been brief and sharp, each side standing up to the last, not one yielding or calling for mercy.

Then through the old fortress the men had roamed, gathering the stolen treasures of many an unfortunate ship. 'Twas of these I listened to intently, knowing beforehand that the hiding place of Long Jim's treasures had not been discovered. Did not his skeleton hang on the rocks, guarding it now, even as the white bones of unfortunate pirates had watched it for years ? None would suspect the secret of that strange sight, and fewer would dream of the treasure

place in the rocks nearby. The secret belonged to John and me.

But Priscilla should know it, and Captain Packer—for had they not both risked their lives for me? Priscilla? Yes; for that night she told me under the southern stars, where none but the eyes of the night could see, why she went to sea in Captain Packer's ship only to meet such untoward events. Yet adventure she had expected; even the pirates she went to meet.

'Twas a tale full of mystery and adventure, beginning back on the day of my first disappearance from Boston. Thus it was related, while we followed with unseeing eyes the tracks of foam which trailed over the stern:

“'Twas in your eyes that day, Cousin Allin, when you left the house, that you would do something rash; so plain was it to me that I called you back; but unheeding or unhearing you looked not. Then I knew that I had been foolish—and the tears would come.”

“Before Mr. Burr?” I answered. “Then he thought it for sheer joy that you wept.”

In the moonlight I saw no resentment in the eyes at this bold reply; but the words were sweet that followed:

“'Twas for you that I wept, I told him.”

“And he loved you? Why did you speak so?”

“Because I loved him not; and I wished to test his love for me. 'Twas protestations of loyalty that

he had made ; I took him at his word, and bade him go and bring you to me.”

“ He refused to go ; or did he do your bidding ? ”

“ He went, but never returned. ’Twas in New York I next heard of him. Where he went first I know not ; but all that night I waited anxiously for you. Then when you did not come in the morning, I searched for you, going to the shipyard, to Edith, and to Captain Packer. Neither had seen you ; nor Martin, nor Courtney. I dreaded the worst then, and grew weak and pale with anxiety.

“ I feared rashness on your part first ; then treachery. Long Jim was in my mind, and I sought him out. But he had sailed, and in his sailing I saw coincidence that alarmed me. ’Twas natural to go to father, and tell him of my fears ; to upbraid him for favoring such a man in his employ. He listened to my words quietly, and said nothing ; but when days and nights passed, and my anxiety grew worse, there was fear in his eyes. I read it there ; knowing that in time he would tell me all. ’Twas plain then that he knew of your fate. I gave him no rest till he weakened, and told me the whole story.

“ ’Twill do no good to dwell upon it, Cousin Allin, for a daughter loves her father, no matter how weak and frail he may be. Long Jim had long possessed his soul for some crime they had committed ; holding the danger of exposure over his head till he was afraid to say nay to anything of his. ’Twas crafty spirit that made him work upon father’s fears, and in time—for his children’s sake—to lead him into

other crimes. There was nothing too bad for Long Jim that evil did not suggest to him. Into his crimes he dragged the one he had made his helpless tool; making him, through his fears and weakness, do what makes me shudder. 'Twas in vain he begged and pleaded to bury the past, and part company; Long Jim was too shrewd and crafty to permit that.

"No more is needed than to say my father had to consent to his carrying you away to sea; 'twas arranged to take you by stealth when you slept; but that day, when they watched the house, you led them to the wharves where they captured you. Of the exact method of the capture we knew nothing; 'twas only certain that Long Jim had carried you off to sea. There was promise from him that you would not be killed, that was my only satisfaction; but suffering was to be your lot. 'Twas nothing but revenge that prompted the deed; but that, in such a man, is a terrible thing.

"When this I learned, I knew that I would have to atone for my father's deed; 'twas my duty. This I explained to him; but he would not listen—I protested in vain. 'Twas sad to be so wilful, but it was ever my nature. Then one day sickness overtook him, bringing him quickly to his bed. I waited for him to recover, but he grew weaker, laboring under the burden of his sorrow, till one day there was no hope.

"'Twas a sad blow—for my wilfulness had brought it on, yet it could not be otherwise. My purpose was then clear: I would fit out one of my father's

ships, and with Captain Packer search the seas for you. There were maps and papers of my father's, which made this less impossible; they marked the island where Long Jim had his headquarters, giving latitude and longitude. To me they were puzzling, but to Captain Packer plain. So we set out, with half a hundred stout-hearted men, to find you, Cousin Allin, but in time ran into a storm, and were nearly wrecked. Then, when disabled, Long Jim in the *Black Racer* sailed down upon us. 'Twas that fight where so many of his men were killed; 'twas a bloody battle, but we were outnumbered.

"When the battle was going against us, Captain Packer escaped from the ship, promising to bring back ships and men to rescue us both. That made me hope for the best, and it has come to pass. He swam away from the ship with life-preserver while the pirates were looking for him below. Then night came on, and in the darkness he escaped till picked up by a passing clipper.

"That, Cousin Allin, is why I went to sea. 'Twas to atone for my father's misdeeds. 'Twas little I could do; but 'tis done."

There was silence between us; the stars seemed never so bright; and the phosphorescence that played about the trail of foam sparkled with great brilliancy. Yet 'twas not of these we were thinking, nor scarce saw. When I spoke, there was trembling in the voice, saying:

"Priscilla, there was no need to atone for the deed; but now 'tis done let it pass. It has brought suffer-

ing to you ; for that I'm sorry. To me it has brought great joy."

Beneath the cloak I sought the soft hand ; grasping it, and adding gently : "'Twas love for you, Priscilla, that sent me to the docks that day ; 'twas love for you that would have sent me to sea, and 'tis love for you that makes happiness possible now."

Then with eyes gazing into each other's, and hands clasped warmly, I continued : "'Tis love that was strengthened with sorrow and misfortune, Priscilla ; love that never wavered. Through the darkest of days it always brought sunshine ; 'twill be so in the future. Such love have I for you—and for none other."

There was timid glance in the eyes, a falling of the voice, but the words were plain : " Allin, I love you ! "

'Twas all that mortal needed ; said simply, but tenderly. With great joy then I drew her to my arms, and between the passionate embraces repeated over and over the love I bore her. There was sweet reception of this ; for she smiled into my face, and listened with greedy ears.

" 'Tis never told too often, Allin," she said, when I was fearful lest I should tire her with its repetition. " I like it."

To which I responded in like strain, murmuring once again the story that never seemed old. 'Twas thus we pledged our troth under the southern skies, where none could see nor hear,

XXXVI.

AND NOW THE TALE IS TOLD TO THE END.

A WEEK later the anxiety and stress of our strange adventures were nearly forgotten in the joy of the new life that had dawned for us. 'Twas Edith who first met us on our return to Boston, and to my early playmate I first told of the love I bore for Priscilla, and of the adventures I had met in wooing her. Then she replied, with happiness in her own eyes :

“ 'Twas easy to see that she loved you, Allin, long before you went to sea ; 'twas stupid of you not to have known it.”

I could not answer this, except to murmur :

“ 'Twas because love was blind ; 'tis always so.”

“ And jealous, too,” she added.

I made no denial ; I could now rest content. Not even Courtney's presence disturbed me ; 'twas so long since we had fought over Priscilla's love that all had been forgotten. Yet one day she tried to test my faith in her love, asking archly :

“ Have you heard that Aaron Burr is in Boston again ? I was to meet him to-night. 'Tis a ball given in his honor.”

“ And you must go,” I said, smiling ; “ 'tis nothing ill I bear him.”

"But he is a great man now ; 'tis said he will some day be President," she continued demurely.

"So much more reason for your accepting," I urged, not awakened to any jealousy, so secure felt I of her love. She shook her head slowly, replying softly :

"But 'tis not to honor me that he sends the invitation ; 'tis another he loves, and he wishes me to see her. 'Tis a man's way to show that his disappointment was not mortal. But I shall not go."

We looked into each other's eyes, and what we read there added to our love and trust.

After reaching Boston John Wooster, who had been so instrumental in helping us, had grown suddenly morose and gloomy ; 'twas the thought of his load of crimes that weighed upon his spirit. But one day I brought his mother to Boston—now old and feeble—and pointed to the ex-pirate, saying :

"'Tis John, Hannah ; John, whom you taught me to love and revere long ago. He's come home at last to tell his story ; 'tis full of interest—better than any you invented."

The good woman stood a moment irresolute, gazing intently at the one-eyed giant ; then with a cry of joy she rushed toward him, saying brokenly :

"'Tis him ! 'Tis my John ! I knew he would come ! I knew it !"

The sullen cloud lifted from the man's face ; the hands which held those of his aged mother trembled ; and for a moment there was silence. Then I walked from the room, and left them to their joy.

They now live peacefully and contentedly on the old Winfield farm; 'twas an act of friendship to deed the place to them that yielded me much pleasure. There was need for my labors in Boston. Martin was ill-fitted for the work of superintending the great shipbuilding interests his father had left him, and the duty devolved upon me.

* * * * *

'Tis this that has held me back from the sea; but some day the *Black Racer* will once more carry a strange crew to the pirate island. This time 'twill go to bring back Long Jim's treasures, buried in the rocky ledge facing the sea, where a dangling skeleton still watches by day and by night, swinging roughly in the wind, and grinning horribly at the patient vultures which circle about. Then shall Captain Packer learn of the secret; and John shall be summoned from his farm home; and I shall drop the details of business to revisit once more the scene of my adventures. 'Twill be a trip, too, that even Edith and Priscilla may take—a voyage fraught with pleasure from beginning to end.

'Tis near time now that preparations should be made; one more trip across the sea, and the *Black Racer* shall be docked and refitted for her strangest of journeys. Facing her prows, too, will be the figurehead of Priscilla, which for so long stood in the model-loft, accumulating the mold and dust of months. 'Twas finished soon after our return to Boston, Priscilla posing once more till the right ex-

pression was forever carved thereon. Even she then said, with slow meditation :

“ Yes, Allin ; 'tis like me. I see it now.”

“ 'Tis the new Priscilla more than the old,” I added ; “ 'tis sweeter and purer. The coldness of the face has gone, and the heart is there. 'Tis that you see now ; 'twas there before, but you were blind to it.”

For a long time we stood before it, memories running riot with the past. I spoke again, saying tenderly :

“ You did not know love then, and 'twas love that was needed to interpret the expression ; for 'twas my great love for you that made the face so pure and noble.”

She turned away, but said hesitatingly : “ No, 'twas not that, but jealousy. I thought you loved Edith ; and I saw Edith in the model, and in all that you did. It poisoned life and mind.”

“ Then 'twill cause no more harm,” I said, folding her into my arms. “ 'Tis time to love now ; and there is no room for jealousy where love is.”

THE END.





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